

Viktoria Somogyi
presents

FORECLOSING ON FAITH

**AMERICA'S CHURCH
CLOSING CRISIS**

A FILM BY

Viktoria Somogyi and Jeff MacIntyre

PRODUCED AND DIRECTED BY **VIKTORIA SOMOGYI AND JEFF MACINTYRE**

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY **JEFF MACINTYRE**

CAMERA **STEVEN BOGNAR AND GIANNI CIGNA**

DRONE OPERATOR **TOM KONDILAS**





FORECLOSING ON FAITH

Logline

What happened after the Academy Award winning film “Spotlight”? An intense battle is the focus of the doc “Foreclosing on Faith” — a modern-day David and Goliath story as small Catholic communities across the U.S. fight to save their churches from improper closure.

Short Synopsis

Churches are being closed at an alarming rate. The U.S. Catholic Church justifies the closings with claims of shrinking parishes, priest shortages and lack of vibrancy. Some of the faithful cry foul and say it’s all about money to bankroll sins of the past.

A dramatic struggle is captured in Cleveland, Boston and New York as parishioners fight to save their spiritual homes. Picking up where “Spotlight” left off, “Foreclosing on Faith” uncovers the truth behind church closings and offers solutions to keep the doors to the faithful open.



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The Whole Story

Bishops justify the closings with claims of cash-strapped parishes, priest shortages and lack of vibrancy. Yet the faithful cry foul and claim it's all about raising money for dioceses facing financial challenges. Many of these churches have strong ethnic identities, ancestral and cultural ties going back centuries. This intense battle over the closures is the focus of a new documentary, "Foreclosing on Faith" — a modern-day David and Goliath tale as Catholics strive to keep their precious communities. Every time a church is closed, a small piece of the community fades away. Churches provide a social safety, a net that is unraveling, while those with strong ethnic ties provide a strong sense of cultural identity.

At a time when immigration and discrimination have never been more polarizing, this is one conversation people from every community need to start having.

"Foreclosing on Faith" documents this dramatic struggle taking place in Cleveland, Boston and New York, some of which is fallout from the Church's sexual abuse crisis.

Picking up where the Academy Award winning "Spotlight" left off, the film uncovers the truth behind the official reasons of church closings. It's a Catholic documentary version of the recently released "All Saints" in which a small group of refugees tries to save their tiny Episcopal church, condemned for closure.



Director's Statement

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Community building forces are important to protect in today's fragile world. When more and more people are getting lonely and isolated, local communities offer a safe-haven and comfort for many people. One example of community building forces is churches. For ethnic communities in the process of settling down in the United States, these centers have played an essential role in history.

But over past decades, a very destructive and accelerating process has been taking place in the Catholic Church: the closing of these important places - the parishes. With Jeff MacIntyre, I set out on this journey in 2014 to uncover the reasons behind this disturbing phenomenon and share my findings in a documentary.

As a Hungarian journalist, I have spent a month every year in USA since 2006 visiting Hungarian communities, making interviews, trying to understand how these communities live, how they conserve their homeland's historical and cultural heritage and identity, their ties to it, and what role faith plays in it. Destroying a home – a spiritual one in the case of these faith communities – causes an enormous shock, inflicting a huge and inestimable crisis on people at many levels, which cannot be underestimated when such decisions are made by the responsible. I wanted to analyze how communities react to these shock waves, and what strategies they apply in response. What interested me most was what those factors are that

enable an individual or, in this case a small, seemingly powerless community to come up with a winning strategy to bring them out of a desperate and an extremely disadvantageous, if not lifethreatening, situation. I talk about Catholic communities only because I know them best.

We can substitute them with any other religious or nonreligious communities. The focus is not on a particular religion but on strategies and survival techniques for small communities.

Following my mother's advice, "If you can't build, don't destroy", my intention was to give a 360-degree picture of the players involved in such situations. If they chose not to take part, that was their decision; opportunity was given to everyone. With this documentary, my intention was to open and facilitate a dialogue between the parties to arrive at a win-win decision. Returning from a shoot, on a Sunday, on the highway between Dayton and Cleveland, Ohio, we stopped for lunch at a Mexican restaurant.

A complete stranger of Hispanic origin, whom we opened the door for, letting him in before us, paid our check and left a note saying: "Pass it on". Apart from showing the plight, the suffering of these faith-based groups, my goal is also to pass on to the viewer the generosity and the immense richness of these small, endangered communities and to pass on hope to these afflicted groups.

The Filmmakers



Viktoria Somogyi

Viktoria Somogyi is a Hungarian Journalist/Economist living in Rome, Italy. For over a decade, she's been an Editor for the Hungarian Program of Vatican Radio in Rome. Viktoria also freelances as a Vatican/Rome correspondent for numerous publications, magazines, radio stations, online news agencies and writes for an American Catholic monthly. She established and led the Hungarian edition of H2Onews, multimedia news service (now Aleteia) in Rome. Viktoria has recently published her first book as a co-author at the Vatican Publishing House. The book was selected for the Frankfurt Book Fair 2015.



Jeff MacIntyre

Since 1988, Jeff MacIntyre has been producing reality-based/newsformatted television content, infomercials and documentaries. With 45 nominations and 16 Emmy Awards, he believes everyone has a story to tell and, working with ABC News, has traveled the world to bring those stories to light. Assignments have taken him to Africa, Europe, the Middle East, Central and S. America. Jeff recently received two Emmys and Edward R. Murrow Awards for the ABC documentary "The Legacy of Heart Mountain". This is one of the highest honors in broadcast journalism! Jeff's Los Angeles-based production company, Content Media Group, creates content to excite, engage and inform.

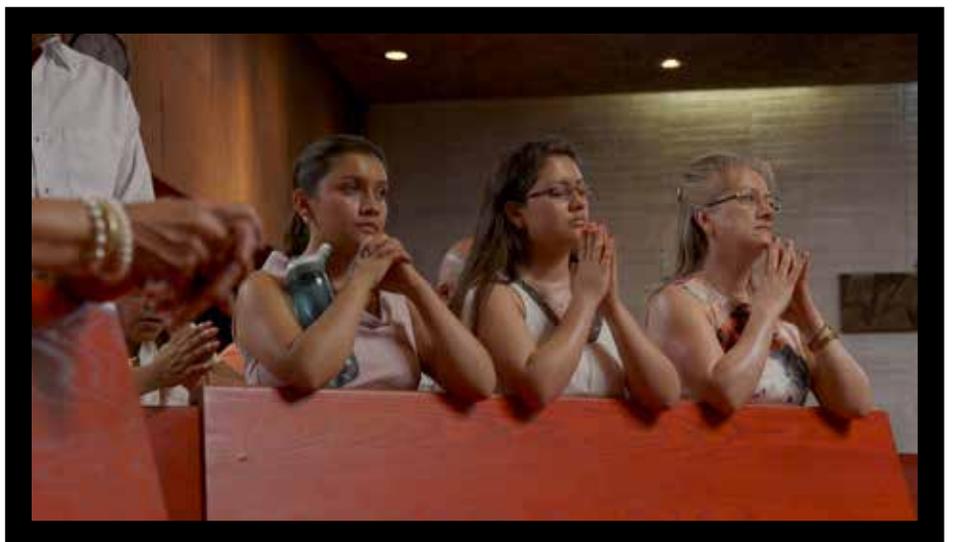
Film Images

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Production Photos

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CREDITS

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DRONE OPERATOR TOM KONDILAS
Editor JEFF MACINTYRE
Archival Video JOHN JUHASZ,
TRACY HARRINGTON KIDDIE AND MIKE WENDT

GENRE DOCUMENTARY
LANGUAGE ENGLISH
RUNNING TIME 52 MINUTES
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NEW YORK, ROME (ITALY), BUDAPEST (HUNGARY)
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN HUNGARY
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