

# What 'Encanto' teaches us about our charisms and the gifts of the Holy Spirit



Compared to many people around me, I wouldn't consider myself a movie fanatic. True, I love movies and can sit through any length of film (such as a recent double-header of Marvel's "Infinity War" and "Endgame"), but I have a poor memory for one-liners and dialogue. And then there are my siblings, roommate and fiancé who all have a knack for quoting, well, everything. A day doesn't go by where someone makes a reference I recognize but simply can't place.

On the other hand, I have a decent ear for music. It doesn't take me more than a couple listens to get the melody of a song, and filling in the lyrics isn't too much harder. However, that can be problematic when your brain refuses to shut off at night as it's filing away an entire movie's worth of songs.

That's what happened at the beginning of the year after I watched "Encanto" with my roommate. Over Christmas break, I had watched the new Disney film with my family and immediately fell in love with the characters, story and, especially, the music. In my opinion, it's an instant Disney classic, melding good storytelling with music you will want to sing along to over and over again. So when I came back to Fort Wayne, I quickly convinced my roommate that we needed to watch "Encanto."

Before Christmas, I had read a review published online by Angelus News titled, "'Encanto' proves a kids movie can thrive without identity politics," and that's exactly what it is.

Even more, when watched through a Catholic-Christian lens, it's a beautiful testimony to family and our identity as adopted sons and daughters of God.

Without giving away too many spoilers, "Encanto" is about the Madrigals, a family who has been given a miracle – a magical candle that has blessed their home and community with protection and special gifts. Not only is the house itself – which they lovingly call *casita* – imbued with magic in a way that gives it some semblance of life, but each child born into the family is given magical gifts that continue to help the family and community. That is, each child with the exception of Mirabel, the spunky protagonist who, despite her desire to be useful and have her own gift to share, tries to be grateful for simply being a part of the amazing Madrigal family.

Set in Colombia, the film is bright and fast paced; in fact, I highly suggest watching with the captions on so you can keep up with the snappy dialogue and lyrics. But amid this perfect paradise, the family encounters challenges when the magic appears to grow weak. While the family seems perfect from the outside, viewers quickly see how certain characters feel defined by their gifts, which leads to family tension and secrets.

Again, without spoiling the ending, I loved the numerous parallels to the spiritual life. We, too, are gifted with a miracle through our baptism – a baptism that brings us into a special family. (Note that a candle is lit at our baptism as well!) And through this baptism, we are given the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which are awakened in a new way at our confirmation.

And yet, as Scripture says, we are not defined by our gifts. Rather, our gifts are meant to be used for the good of our family, the Church. As members of the Body of Christ, we do not live for ourselves alone. Rather, the Body of Christ is deprived when we keep our charisms to ourselves or when we

don't use the gifts of the Holy Spirit properly (cf 1 Cor 12).

It's such a breath of fresh air to see such Catholic themes in secular movies, and it's a great opportunity for parents to talk about the role of faith in our lives with their children. So as the winter months keep us inside more and more, I recommend you sit down with friends or family for a fun movie night, and then take these questions to heart: "Am I using the gifts given to me by the Holy Spirit for the good of my family and for the good of the Church? If not, how can I change that?"

If you feel like you don't have any gifts, I promise, you do. Sometimes, it simply comes out in humbler ways.

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