

## A film based on the works of a Camden pastor

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CAMDEN —The world premiere of a film based upon letters written by Msgr. Michael Doyle, pastor of Sacred Heart Parish here, will be presented at Rutgers-Camden Gordon Theater on June 14. Doors open at 6:30 p.m.

The 55-minute movie, "Poet of Poverty," will make its debut on the eve of the 40th anniversary of Msgr. Doyle's arrival in Camden from County Longford in Ireland on June 15, 1968.

The letters are read in the film by actor Martin Sheen whose own pastor comes from Ireland and is a friend of Msgr. Doyle's.

The Heart of Camden Housing Project, which helps to rebuild housing in the city, is coordinating the event and any net proceeds will go to continue its work.

Co-director Sean Dougherty met Msgr. Doyle while he was covering the Republican Convention in Philadelphia [in 2000] for Dutch Television and decided to do a story about George W. Bush's ideas of compassionate conservatism. "I wanted to explore how religious organizations could take on the war against poverty," he said.

He said he couldn't think of a better way to illustrate problems in this vision than to go to "the poorest city in America, Camden, New Jersey, across the Delaware River from Philadelphia."

Dougherty, a parishioner of Sacred Heart, is director of operations at Hopeworks 'N Camden, a youth development program in Camden. He trains inner-city youth in web design, video production, and geographic information systems.

"When we met, Msgr. Doyle added my name to his list of almost 3,000 people to whom he sends a letter each month," said Dougherty. "His letters struck a chord. Their honesty, their story-telling, the scenes he described, the anger and the sorrow at the destruction he saw all around him, and yes, the poetry of his language, made an indelible impression on me. Slowly the thought rose to make a film based on these letters."

He and co-director Tana Ross met one day to discuss future documentaries. "I gave her one of Michael's letters to read," Dougherty said. "She was equally moved by what she read and right there we decided we wanted to make a film based on Msgr. Doyle's letters."

Over four years Dougherty and Ross would get together with Msgr. Doyle in Camden to film and edit.

"We decided to accompany him on his yearly visit to Ireland," Dougherty pointed out, "since so much in the letters is rooted in Irish culture, history, and story telling. "

Msgr. Doyle was ordained on May 31, 1959, in St. Peter's Seminary, Wexford.

Ross is the co-founder of Green Room Productions, which produced the film. Co-director Freke Vuijst produced and directed documentaries for the Inter-Church Broadcasting Company of The Netherlands.

Tickets are \$20 apiece and net proceeds will benefit Heart of Camden.

To order e-mail [www.heartofcamden.org](http://www.heartofcamden.org). Tickets ordered before June 6 will be mailed. After that date they can be picked up at the box office.

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