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banalities here too, and some errors of taste. But there are no visions, no conscious piety. In fact, the religious quality of the picture is incidental to, rather than implicit in, its theme. It might, of course, be said that there were fewer opportunities for this film to go wrong for the very reason that it is on a much less exalted level—a much more human and humdrum one—than *Bernadette*; because it deals not so much with faith as with works.

Going My Way is the story of two Roman Catholic priests in a New York slum. Father Fitzgibbon (Barry Fitzgerald) is old, stubborn, unbusinesslike. His parishioners love him, but his parish is in debt, his church in disrepair. Father O'Malley is young, efficient, modern in his outlook and methods. Father Fitzgibbon does not know it at first, but the young priest has been sent by the bishop to supersede him and pull the church off the rocks. Since Father O'Malley is a crooner as well as a cleric, has been a baseball star (which appeals to the young toughs in the street), and is able to compose songs which a friend who is a star of the Metropolitan Opera (Risè Stevens) "plugs" for him and sells at a handsome price, he is able to solve his parochial problems with comparative ease. The street gangs are quickly converted into a choir and sent on tour to help the church funds. A wayward girl (Jean Heather) is satisfactorily married off to the son of the man who holds the mortgage on the church. Winning the confidence and friendship of Father Fitzgibbon is more difficult (and considering the young priest's collegiate manners that is not surprising), but by the end of the film the old chap has been persuaded to play golf and has been reduced to tears (along with most of the audience) by being reunited with his ancient mother from Ould Oireland.

ON the face of it, that story is sheer hokum. And not merely on the face of it either: the film goes all out for laughs and tears in the most unashamed way imaginable. In some sequences the sentiment almost drips off the screen. And yet it gets away with it superbly, because nearly everybody connected with the show was not merely an artist in his or her own right but was also obviously engaged in something approaching a labour of love. Leo McCarey's direction puts all the emphasis on the human personalities involved; his handling of the early scene in the church where the young priest "shouts" the old one to a candle makes it a typical little masterpiece of reverent comedy.

But the picture's paramount asset is the team-work of Crosby and Fitzgerald. Their styles of acting are in complete contrast, yet one is the perfect foil to the other. Though it may seem like being wise after the event, I think I can claim to have suggested several times in the past that Bing Crosby is a good actor; a far better actor than he is a crooner, though as a crooner he is better than most. *Going My Way* is a complete justification of that viewpoint; the few scenes in the film in which he croons are not unendurable, but they are the weakest parts of it. Yet surprisingly good

as Crosby is, he is of course left miles behind in technical ability by Barry Fitzgerald, who is the star of the picture in fact, if not in the credit titles. Fitzgerald's performance as Father Fitzgibbon is probably the funniest, wittiest, and most endearing portrayal of old age that we have ever seen on the screen.

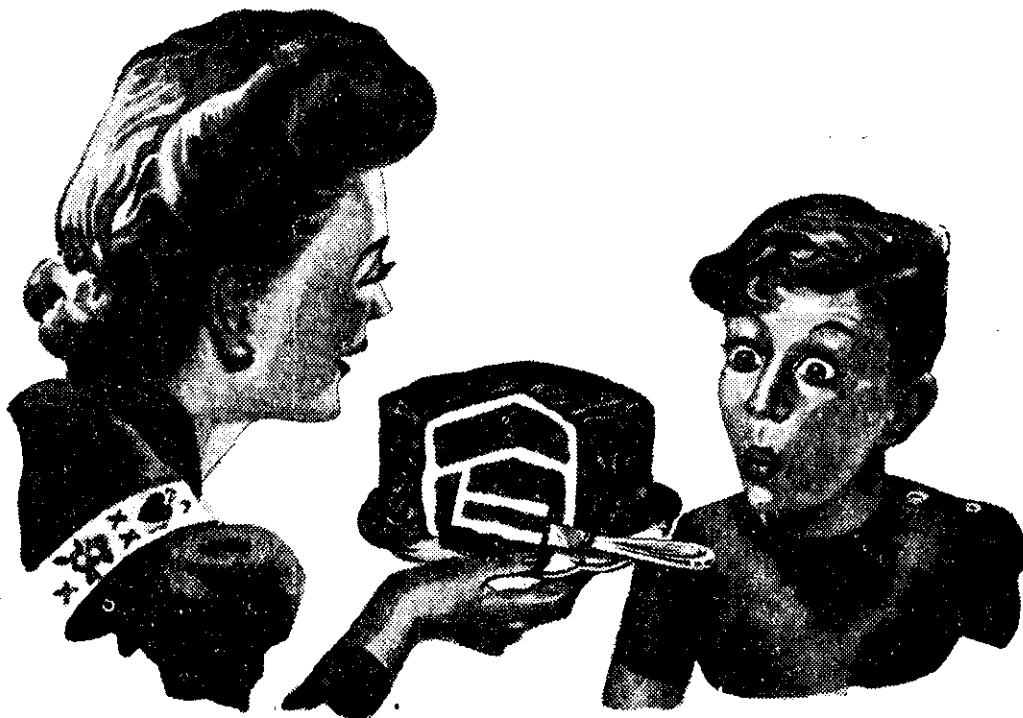
Because *Going My Way* is concerned with human relationships rather than with experiences of the spirit, it is outwardly a much less religious film than *Bernadette*. But I think only outwardly: its very humanity seems to me to give it a more valid and certainly a more universal appeal. At any rate I hope you will see both films, for both are exceptional.

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