

# decalogue...

# after Decalogue

(dekalog... po Dekalogu)

*decalogue... after Decalogue* - a cycle of documentaries, based on the *auteur* idea of Beata Januchta, is an elevator trip across the floors in the apartment block of our everydayness. This project is an explicit reference to Krzysztof Kieslowski's *Decalogue*, which premiered 20 years ago.

The mastermind of the cycle invited representatives of the new generation of directors to cooperate with the project. And thus was born an original ten-theme tale of Polish everydayness. Modern Polish human-interest stories, that is. Ordinary people are the leads of each part, disoriented and lost, overwhelmed by the onslaught of their quotidian concerns, on a search for their own identity.

Each part is an original *auteur* interpretation of the given Commandment. Each is a question and, at the same time, a statement, proposition, or sometimes a puzzle.

Each director shows spheres of human conduct on which a shadow is cast. They enter a specific dimension of life to reveal a fraction of the universal truth that every Commandment features. In line with the cycle mastermind's idea, the ten commandments are those man is opposed to, who, transformed by his social and personal existence, battered but wiser, he should finally begin to obey.

What integrates the ten stories is Michał Lorenz's music and the original introductory piece. Here we have an old ten-story elevator, an ordinary place, that takes on a moral value, as you can read into each floor a message of *Decalogue*, an invitation to meet man along with his secrets, trials and tribulations. On each floor of this documentary *decalogue*, the sanctuary of human conscience is monitored.



TELEWIZJA  
POLSKA

## THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

Written and directed by Beata Januchta

This film is about the everyday yearning, the overwhelming loneliness in the world of faith and feelings, about a search for God. About doubt that doesn't bespeak a lack of faith, but only its human weakness.

This is a story of Maciek, a smiling, lively sociologist in Gdańsk. Apparently, there is nothing special about it just the ritual of everyday sidestepping of problems by a vigorous thirtysomething, who grapples with his sense of guilt, painstakingly overcoming his own complexes and dispelling his fears. What he repeatedly declares is *I'm afraid of the Lord God*. He had a four-year stint in a religious seminary, which, having fallen in love, he deserted. Likewise he deserted that woman for another one.

Throughout his life he has built up ties that bind, only to finally disappear. Hence his fear of God, possibly. Yet he desires to find Him and see the light.

*My God is full of contradictions and I sometimes have the feeling that He has taken us for a ride by creating us and then hightailing is what Maciek opines about his faith. In his rough-and-tumble life, Maciek has ridden roughshod over others a couple of times and is now battered by fate and consequences of his own making. This is a film about an ordinary man who goes astray despite the good advice he's offered.*

## THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

Written and directed by Beata Hyży-Czołpińska

This is a story of how a fifty-five-year-old feels on hearing from his dying mother that he is not her legitimate son. The fiftysomething Mr. Zbyszek tries to find out his roots, to ascertain his own true history and to recover his true identity.

Out of the blue, the lead learns that he was born to a Jewish family. His memory still retains days of his childhood when his playmates in the courtyard would call him Little Yid and his dearest mother used to drive away bullies. Even in his impressionable age, he would not ask for the reason of insults he incurred. It was better, safer, and less troublesome that way. Today Mr. Zbyszek racks his brain to recall his neighbors and puts down the names of those children who used to call him names in the courtyard. He would like to look them up and talk to them.

He has stopped going to church and attends synagogue instead. He has got himself a *yarmulka* and tries to talk his wife into cooking Jewish dishes. Rather than tell his grandchildren about his own experience, he relates what he has read about in books. He wants them to be aware and proud of their Jewish grandpa. He also regrets not starting his search earlier when more people were still alive, who could have born witness to his true identity. But he is happy in his own way. Though by the end of his life he will not have discovered his real name, he has found out his true faith and his God, to Whom he wants to remain faithful.

## THE THIRD COMMANDMENT

**OBSERVE THE SABBATH AND KEEP IT HOLY (III: Pamiętaj, abyś dzień święty święcił)**  
45', colour, Betacam, Poland 2008

Written and directed by Maciej Cuske

Holy Communion is the pretext here to see what is the most important in life. This is a very personal and sincere film.

The director watches the life of his family for several months. Showing their intimate world, he tries to touch that which, to the whole family, is the most important - the sacred.... Apparently, there is nothing special going on. It is an ordinary quotidian life hard-pressed, entangled in everydayness, often amusing, but tragic as well. Yet, in this way, you may tell about happiness, love, joy, and the eternal values, undisturbed by the hard crazy times in which we live.

This is a story about the advent of the first Communion, an essential event for Staś (director's son), his parents and grandparents. Each generation, however, has a different attitude to it. To the grandparents, it is the most important thing of all. Should this duty go unfulfilled, their world would end up in wrack and ruin. To the parents (director and his wife), it is an event of no special significance. And to Staś, it matters in a still different way. Like other kids, he only dreams about presents to receive after the ceremony, but he is afraid if he manages to learn all the necessary prayers. So Grandma helps him learn them in the evening.

**Best Documentary Film (National Competition) at the Krakow Film Festival 2008**

## THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

**...TILL IT HURST (...do bólu)**  
25', colour, Betacam, Poland 2008

Written and directed by Marcin Koszałka

Though over fifty, Mr. Jacek has not settled down yet. He lives in an old villa of the commie times, unfinished, with barely one furnished room that he occupies with his mother. He lives with her, felling responsible for her, but, consequently, having to stand her gripes, dissatisfaction and sharp intolerant opinionatedness. Their coexistence often turns into downright torment and her overprotective care, into a prison for him. She is a woman of neurotic personality: self-righteous and possessive. Whereas Jacek helpless, lost and full of complexes - does not even approve of his own body. He has lived in celibacy for 20 years, often takes to the bottle, and continually talks about his father. Camera observes his quotidian life of a psychiatrist of the Kraków psychiatric hospital. He often paints pictures that now number in the dozens if not hundreds, each featuring the Christ on the Cross. When a woman suddenly shows up in his life, this triggers conflicts with the mother.

**Best Documentary Film at the Krakow Film Festival 2008**

## THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

Written and directed by Ewa Świecińska

This is an unusual story of love that helps to stay alive, the process of passing away of a man who is loved and wants to live to the end of his days.

Twenty-year-old Ania and Bartek are the leads. The latter is mortally ill with cancer, with only several weeks to go. He is bound to a wheelchair and lives in a hospice for cancer patients. A student of theology, Ania has decided to check out her theories of love, suffering, and death, decided to stay with Bartek, moved in the hospice and fully devoted her life to him. The doctors say that the only reason for Bartek to endure is Ania and her love. Beside them there is the indifferent world of the healthy, closed to suffering.

Bartek is a denizen of another world, but Ania has succeeded in crossing the border between ours and that of the dying. They both know what the point of their suffering is, which they have discovered thanks to love. This film is trying to show that even in suffering, with no light at the end of the tunnel, you may still be happy as never before.

## THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

Written by Aneta Augustyniak, directed by Piotr Jaworski

A story of a woman held hostage by her own decision and her family expectations.

For several months, Beata has been living outside the convent. Now she is completely on her own. For the first time in 20 years, she comes out into the street without her frock. She learns how to speak louder. For the first time she can buy what she wants. Time is running mercilessly, though. She has to make a decision whether to serve the Lord white-frocked or to return to the world.

The church understands such situations. If Sister Judyta would like to discard her frock, in a matter of years her monastic vows will be annulled. She will be free again. She will close the convent door behind her but will not walk out on God. She may find love some day, get married, or even find enough time to bear children. Hers will also be a road to salvation.

Judyta's family, however, does not want change and cannot forgive her. They demand that she persevere as a nun. So Judyta must put on her frock again and live for the Lord. "You vowed chastity, poverty and obedience. You were supposed to give yourself to the Lord. Do not commit adultery, then, and do not return to the laity, to our kind of life," is her father's parting shot.

## THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT

Written and directed by Beata Bugajska

A story of a man who wants to be just without counting on justice. Though he stammers, he can type on an old typewriter. He does not know envy, but knows how much a loaf of bread is worth.

This is a story about a reformed thief. Rysiek has stopped drinking and stealing and started to give away bread.

Though he is 56, he looks older. He has destroyed his body. In the past his only belief was the law of the jungle. He'd steal indiscriminately, most often at the local market, sometimes in church. Yet now, every morning he opens the door with Lord God's Bakery and gives away loaves of bread. The folks snatch the bread quick and disappear in silence. Seldom does anyone say Thank you.

Rysiek knows how much wrong he has done. That's why he is in a hurry to make amends. He is no more a youngster and is ailing. The reformed thief has his own shrine in the courtyard, his charges, bread to be given away every day, and sins to redeem. He wants nothing from anyone, does not count on being praised or popular. Would that his life lasted long enough...

## THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

Written and directed by Robert Różycki

Every day we lie and are lied to. This is a staple of our everyday communication game for survival. We live in a world of ruined identity.

This film is a story of a defeat, a failed attempt to get out of the maze of manipulation. Just a film about a failed attempt at exposing a lie and discovering the truth and, at the same time, about the impossibility of liberation and about the loneliness on the road to success, which is an escape from the world of fiction. The Regional Court sentenced Krystian, 36, to 25-year imprisonment for homicide of unusual cruelty. The trial was recognized as the most interesting circumstantial case in the post-war history of Polish judiciary. Krystian has been remanded for 2 years. His parents visit him. Occasionally, a journalist shows up and then they have a long talk.

This is not a reproduction of the trial. The journalist has been intrigued by this story of a man in a tight spot. He tries to sound the opinions, ascertain the motivations, and present arguments. He turns into a snooper who, among the threads he picks up and the words he hears, tries to expose the truth. He gullibly hopes to ascertain the essence of the manipulation, only to fall victim to it, which he discovers with time. The facts seem impossible to ascertain. After so many meetings and talks, the journalist, though far more knowledgeable now, is nowhere near the successful end of his investigation. All is still like a blank page, an empty monitor with no words written on it. Such is the truth, as obvious as the barred window in the cell.

## THE NINTH COMMANDMENT

Written and directed by Jan Sosiński

The work on the screenplay is still in progress. This is supposed to be a film about swingers.

## THE TENTH COMMANDMENT

Written and directed by Beata Januchta

This is a story of those who, though homeless, have dreams. Tried sorely by life, they live without envy and have the courage to dream. Rather than extras in their own story, they want to be the leads. Oddly enough, the envy of others uplifts them and gives them confidence.

Bogumił and Tadeusz are homeless. One used to drink, cheat, and steal once and the other lived in a tomb in the cemetery for a year. However, you can always not only survive but start over. They both have discovered that their hopes and expectations may come true. All it takes is trying.

After his last conviction, Bogumił decided never to return to jail again. One day a friend from the shelter took him to an audition. He has 'starred' in 14 films since then. His roles of an extra he calls 'starring.' Today he dreams about an apartment and new auditions. He met Tadeusz in the shelter and now they both have the time of their lives, the most important of their roles. There is a modern version of the story of the eternal myth of Phoenix, a person or thing that has become renewed or restored after suffering calamity or apparent annihilation. These days Bogumił and Tadeusz are waiting for a call from the agency, news of other auditions and other roles. They can patiently spend all day on the set only to rehearse a scene a dozen times. Back in the shelter, Mirek is waiting, the one never satisfied and a mocker at that. He asks them about their daily pickings and maliciously sneers at their dreams. It is his envy, however, that gives their morale a big boost.

Hard-pressed by everydayness, lost among different values, we tend to forget not only about others, but also about ourselves and our dreams. Yet sometimes someone somewhere lucks up. So maybe this is worth telling about...

*decalogue... after Decalogue* is a dusted and scratched mirror of the elevator in the apartment block of everydayness, where the relations between good and evil are not clearly pronounced and blurred. Just like the reflection of each of our faces, of the masks we put on every day, like our dreams and doubts. Why, nobody has promised a life like a pleasant walk without getting short of breath. And the colorful carousel of the world is going round ever faster..

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