

You might have seen the film, *Saving Private Ryan*. It tells the story of a team of American soldiers and their Captain John Miller on a mission to find and rescue a Private James Ryan. His three brothers were killed and the Secretary of War in America wanted the only remaining Ryan son brought back home to his family.

Although it is a War Film, crosses and crucifixes appear throughout the whole story. The first and last scene focuses on a man kneeling before a Cross. During the film one of Captain Miller's soldiers kisses the crucifix around his neck before he aims at the enemy, and so on.

But why is the plot of this film marked with images of the Cross? The answer might seem obvious. This is a film about salvation, even of one single life, and the Cross is the most prominent image of salvation in the history of the world.

However, when you consider the director of this film, Stephen Spielberg, is Jewish, and the Cross is "*a stumbling block to Jews*," it becomes a little less obvious, until you get to the very end!

At the end of *Saving Private Ryan*, Ryan is indeed saved and the enemy defeated, and all at a high price too. Most of Miller's men are killed during the journey to the place where Ryan is located. Miller himself dies on a bridge. But as he is dying, he asks Ryan to lean towards him. As he does, Miller whispers just two words, "earn this."

What a contradiction! On the one hand, throughout the film Spielberg continually reminds us of the free gift of salvation won for us on Calvary. On the other hand, he ends with the complete opposite message; that salvation, achieved at a huge cost, must be earned!