

## "BRIDES OF CHRIST"

### A TELEVISION DRAMA IN SIX HOURS

The women who pledge their lives and their virtue to God are called 'Brides of Christ' by their Church. To the world they are known as nuns.

This is the story of Catherine, Paul and Ambrose. They are nuns. Rosemary, Frances and Brigid are their students. Protected from the world by the convent walls of Santo Spirito, they live by the vows of poverty, chastity and, above all, obedience.

The convent rites go back to the sixth century - the Great Silence, the Chapter of Faults and the foreswearing of Particular Friendships. But our story takes place in the 1960's - the decade of the Pill, Vietnam and the Rolling Stones - and it is the contradiction of ancient and new, sacred and profane, discipline and riot which fuels this drama. It is also the story of an ancient institution in the turmoil of change.

CATHERINE is a young nun who resisted her religious vocation all the way to the convent gates. A passionate, intelligent woman, she struggles to reconcile her need for the stillness that only religious life can bring with the rigid authoritarianism of a heartless church hierarchy.

FRANCES finds herself incarcerated in a regimented boarding school by her single mother. When the truth comes out that her mother is a divorcee Frances suffers the opprobrium of the daughter of the fallen woman. It is Frances' most traumatic rite of passage.

AMBROSE is the reluctant superior of Santo Spirito. The changes forced on religious communities by the Second Vatican Council are the most radical in a thousand years. They lead to tense conflict between the convent's conservative older women and the younger nuns in favour of change. Caught between the two, Ambrose finds herself fighting for the life of an opponent and the future of her convent.

ROSEMARY is a bad girl. But her wickedness is borne of a lack of knowledge for which the Church and Rosemary's parents are to blame. She ridicules the Church's precepts for moral behaviour ("The primrose path that leads to perdition for women is paved with the kisses of men" advises one religious pamphlet) yet she lacks the equipment to articulate her criticism. Her rebellion is blind. Rosemary's is a funny, poignant and ultimately liberating tale.

PAUL entered the convent at eighteen and had never had to make a decision in her life - until she falls in love with Jack Delahunty, a young rebel of the Church who has left the priesthood. Paul leaves the convent for him and is confronted with the grim reality of life outside the convent gates. Far more painful is the realisation that Jack's anger at the Church will consume her. Paul has to grow up fast.

These are some of the tales of "Brides of Christ". They provide a rare revelation of life behind one of the world's oldest institutions and an affecting encounter with a group of unforgettable women.