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**INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC JURY PRIZE AT FILMFEST DC
AWARDED TO *THE NEW WORLD***

WASHINGTON, DC – *The New World*, directed by Jaap van Heusden of The Netherlands, has received the SIGNIS Award at Filmfest DC 2013. The SIGNIS Award is presented to the film judged by its jury to best illuminate and celebrate what it means to be human in a diverse and challenging world. According to the jury citation, the film’s “powerfully spare and deliberate imagery leads the audience to understand” the main character’s “transformation from a sterile view of life to a more richly human world of intimacy.”

The New World tells the story of a woman working in an immigration detainee center who is so locked into her own suffering that she is immune to the sufferings of others. A new arrival from Africa unexpectedly becomes a catalyst through whom she recaptures her humanity. Known to inmates as “the phone lady” she is not above exploiting the desperation of new refugees by assisting them in making illegal phone calls in exchange for jewelry or other valuables. In the process of helping one newly arrived asylum seeker, who has lost his wife in the course of his journey, she is led to confront her own secret grief. The power of the film arises out of spare and powerful imagery and controlled story-telling.

Many other films were also worthy of recognition, says jury chair, Frank Frost, “The fact that the decision of the jury was so difficult is a tribute to Filmfest DC for once again screening a large number of high quality films that explore the many dimensions of our common humanity.”

The SIGNIS Jury also awarded two Special Commendations. *Paris Under Watch*, written and directed by first-time filmmaker Cedric Jimenez in a visual and technical tour de force, was cited for its compelling presentation of twenty-first century ethical issues deriving from new technology. *La Playa DC*, by another first-time director, Juan Andrés Arango of Colombia, was praised for its counter-stereotypical characterization of young men living off the streets in a marginalized community depicting human values we all share, such as family, creativity, dignity, and courage.

Paris Under Watch was one of a dozen films in the festival that illustrates an emerging trend in films that focus on surveillance cameras, Internet hacking, and exploitation of the Internet. Other trends detectable in the festival are the focus on children as pawns in bitter struggles for justice, and the lifting up of the dignity of old age.

SIGNIS (www.signis.net), the official World Catholic Association for Communication, has been seating juries and presenting awards at major international festivals since 1947, including Cannes, Venice, and Berlin. SIGNIS juries are now active in festivals in

nearly forty countries. By its presence in the professional cinema world, SIGNIS seeks to contribute in a concrete way to the development of a cinema aimed towards human and spiritual values.

SIGNIS Jurors, in addition to Frank Frost, were Guido Convents from Belgium, Marjorie Suchocki from California, Gregory Schenden, SJ, and Mary Link Frost.

Full citations of the SIGNIS award and the special Commendation are attached.

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