

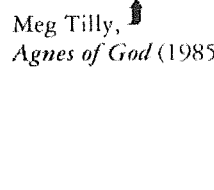



holy rollers

Picture this: Julia Roberts playing a nun. Mercifully, she hasn't yet. (Hopefully, she never will.) But other, more talented actresses and actors have rolled the dice and entered the onscreen convent, exiting with varied results. Some of the more comedic and dramatic portrayals follow, in order of descending believability. —A. Richard Langley

	Actor/Movie	Dilemma	Believability	After the Convent
Ready for the Convent	Audrey Hepburn, <i>The Nun's Story</i> (1959) 	Sister Luke (Hepburn), a nursing nun, has trouble maintaining her vows of silence, chastity, poverty and obedience and eventually leaves the convent.	In one of the most celebrated of all nun portrayals, Hepburn manages, in spite of her sly sexuality, to come through with a sympathetic, believable performance as Sister Luke.	Although not as active as she was in the '50s, Hepburn remains a popular film star, despite starring in tripe like <i>Bloodline</i> and Steven Spielberg's <i>Always</i> .
God Willing	Bess Armstrong, <i>Second Sight</i> (1989)	Sister Elizabeth (Armstrong) falls for a private detective with a psychic partner and gets involved in hijinx.	Fresh-faced Armstrong deserves better after doing an admirable job in this wretched comedy.	Critical and commercial disfavor followed her debut in 1981's <i>The Four Seasons</i> . Undeservedly, her film (<i>Nothing in Common</i>) and television (<i>All Is Forgiven</i>) careers have failed.
	Carmen Maura, <i>Dark Habits</i> (1984)	Sister Damned (Maura) beats bongos and mates with her pet tiger as one of the nuns in the Convent of Humble Redeemers, among whose members are counted ex-murderesses, junkies and prostitutes.	Maura looks comfortable in a convent, displays her ability to transform extreme farce and controversial material into the seemingly realistic. (Is Sister Damned realistic?)	Maura starred in several more films, most notably <i>Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown</i> , for director and one-time pal Pedro Almodovar. Her next film is <i>Ay, Carmela!</i> , directed by Carlos Saura.
	Kathleen Turner, <i>Crimes of Passion</i> (1984) 	Fashion-designer Joanna Crane/street hooker China Blue (Turner) dresses the part of a nun and puts on a "show" for sex-crazed street urchin Reverend Peter Shane (Anthony Perkins).	Hot-co-trot as Sister Blue.	Turner followed with the successful <i>Prizzi's Honor</i> and <i>Peggy Sue Got Married</i> , but now, what with her looks fading, her ever-increasing figure and her puffy face in bombs like <i>V.I. Warshawski</i> , her star-stock is on the down turn.
Not a Prayer	Meg Tilly, <i>Agnes of God</i> (1985) 	Sister Agnes (Tilly) is accused of murdering her immaculately conceived child.	Despite an Oscar nomination for Best Supporting Actress in <i>Agnes</i> , it's a dull and totally unconvincing performance. Even Madonna could portray a nun with more conviction.	Except for <i>Valmont</i> , she's inexplicably cast as the center of sexual attraction in following roles.
	Eric Idle and Robbie Coltrane, <i>Nuns on the Run</i> (1990) 	Idle and Coltrane play Brian and Charlie, mobsters who become Sister Euphemia and Sister Inviolata of the Immaculate Conception after their scheme to rip-off the mob backfires.	With close shaves and crackling female voices, Idle and Coltrane are amusing, but never even remotely convincing.	Idle, always in the shadow of John Cleese, has subsequently done nothing of special interest. Ironically, Coltrane portrayed the Pope in the black comedy <i>The Pope Must Die(t)</i> .

Even though I can understand a performer's hesitancy to portray a nun, I wish more name stars—except Julia Roberts—would roll the dice and enter the onscreen convent. So far, my prayers have been answered.

