

Apostolic succession in director Jason Cusato's 'Park Slope'

By Thomas Tracy

If Jesus' apostles were from Brooklyn, the Bible would have been for mature audiences only.

But, at the same time, there would also be a lot more passages about friendship.

That's the gist of director Jason Cusato's "Apostles of Park Slope," the Brooklyn native's latest film premiering next week at the Brooklyn Lyceum from January 9 through the 16.

Filmed almost entirely in his native Park Slope, Cusato's Apostles — who sound more like third string members of the Outsiders than holy men — could probably kick Peter, Paul, Matthew and Mark's asses with a beer in one hand and a fifth of scotch in the other. That's because many of them are dyed in the wool Brooklynites that Cusato grew up with.

The tale behind "Apostles" is right out of Cusato's life as well.

"A couple of years back two friends of mine lost their mother and father within hours of each other," Cusato remembers. "We banded together and took them out to dinner at Two Toms (on Third Avenue) and had an awesome time," Cusato remembered. "It was the first time that I saw my friend Mike smile."

What made the night even more memorable was that the foul-mouthed free-for-all took place right in front of Father Paul, a local Catholic priest who presided over one of the funerals.

"He was laid back and drinking scotch and he didn't mind that we were ripping on him the whole night," said Cusato. "I thought, 'Imagine if this guy had been a straight holy roller?'"

That thought soon became the script for "Apostles" which was written by Cusato and Jennifer Kalison.

In his incarnation, when their friend Mike loses



Director Jason Cusato's friends turn from surly street kids to holy rollers in "Apostles of Park Slope."

his mother, Chief, Shorty, Magoo, Tiny, King-Filth, Moe and six other pals try to cheer him up with a night at Two Tom's. Also accepting an invitation is a more straight-laced version of Father Paul who is desperately trying to bring people back to St. Thomas Aquinas.

Most of the filming took place right back at Two Toms. Scenes were lensed on Sunday and Monday when the restaurant was closed — right at

the same table the original dinner was held.

Once the premiere is over, Cusato, a proud lapsed Catholic, intends to send his "Apostles" on to the film festival circuit to preach about his own view on friendship — something he learned a lot about during it's filming.

"There were so many passionate people that came on board and they worked their hearts out," he said. "Sometimes you feel like you're all alone

in these projects then you meet people who are willing to sacrifice whatever they can to help you."

If that's not friendship, we don't know what is.

"Apostles of Park Slope" can be seen at the Brooklyn Lyceum, 227 Fourth Avenue, beginning on January 9 at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$10 in advance or \$12 at the door. For more information visit apostlesofparkslope.com or brooklynlyceum.com.