

CROSSROADS

Street 12/9

MTI, Drama, \$24.95 DVD, 'PG-13'

Stars Alan Arkin, Amy Acker, Frank Langella, Orson Bean, Jacob Pitts, Matthew Carey.

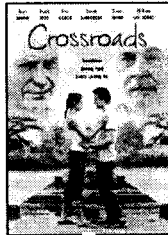
Crossroads plays like a prequel to *The Thorn Birds*, if that iconic love story about a priest torn between his vocation and his love of a woman had taken place in the early 21st century instead of the early 20th century. Nonetheless, it's a lovely little film distinguished by a gifted cast.

A pair of seminary students spends a summer working at a struggling soup kitchen in the deep south. When they arrive Peter (Pitts) questions his vocation, unsure of his commitment to the church, while Gilbert (Carey) has no such doubts.

As the summer progresses, Peter becomes attracted to one of the soup kitchen volunteers. At the same time, he finds within himself resourcefulness, understanding and charity. Meanwhile Gilbert, skilled at the su-

perficial parts of a priestly routine, lacks empathy.

There are many interesting things about *Crossroads*. Characters arrive at defining moments, and they choose unexpected paths. Priests and novitiates are both virtuous and, at the same time, human, especially when dealing with the flawed members of their flocks.



Langella has a lovely tranquility as the priest in charge of the novitiates' training. And Arkin is great as the quirky clergyman who runs the soup kitchen and has an uncanny sixth sense about people.

Pitts delivers a thoughtful performance as a young man poised at the beginning of his adult life, with more questions than answers.

Crossroads winds toward an uncertain ending, making for an engrossing, small drama that will please fans of the anti-blockbuster. The film was originally known as *The Novice*, and should not be confused with the 1986 film starring Ralph Macchio, or the 2002 Britney Spears film. —Anne Sherber

