

ATTACKING MEL'S DAD

Catholic League president William Donohue commented today on news reports regarding an interview that Mel Gibson's father granted to a radio show:

"The attack on 'The Passion of the Christ' is unprecedented in its ruthlessness. The script was stolen and given to those who could be counted on to slam it; tapes of the film were stolen and distributed to those who also could be relied upon to bash it; Mel's faith has been impugned; charges that violence against Jews will occur after the movie has been shown are commonplace; attempts to bully Gibson into changing the film have been ongoing; demands for a postscript have been made by those who seek to put Gibson on the defensive; bishops have been badgered to get Mel's friends in line; the Vatican has been lobbied to criticize the movie; accusations that the movie is being kept away from Jewish neighborhoods have been made; fears that the movie will damage youngsters who see it have been expressed; demands that Gibson vet his script for approval to officials of the Catholic Church have frequently been made; critics have deceitfully gained admission into screenings of the film; highly personal questions about Gibson's life have been raised; sneering comments that the film may make a profit have been voiced; the way the movie has been marketed has been raised in a derisive way; demands that the film be censored have been made at public rallies; Catholics who defend the movie have been insulted by foes of the film; disrespect for Gibson's artistic rights has been voiced many times; and so on.

"Now they're going after Mel's 85-year-old father. As I have already told reporters, I will have none of it. The search-and-destroy operation being conducted by the movie's critics knows no boundaries. Make no mistake about it, those obsessed with killing this movie will not manipulate Bill Donohue into berating Hutton Gibson. Nor will they push me to ask for

information on how I can contact their fathers, though the thought is tempting.”