

# CATHOLIC BISHOPS DID NOT CONDEMN GIBSON MOVIE

Catholic League president William Donohue spoke today to media reports that misrepresent the sentiments of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) on the subject of the Mel Gibson movie, "The Passion":

"Several media reports, as well as comments made last night on CNN by Rabbi Marvin Hier, claim that the USCCB has branded the Mel Gibson film 'The Passion' as anti-Semitic. 'What I am saying is that four Catholic scholars representing the Catholic bishops,' offered Rabbi Hier of the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles, 'joined five Jewish scholars, unanimously felt there was a great deal of anti-Semitism in the script.' This account is factually wrong.

"Four Catholic scholars did review the script. But they did so without authorization from the Catholic bishops. That is why the bishops issued an apology to Gibson. Speaking for the bishops, USCCB General Counsel Mark Chopko said, 'We regret the situation has occurred and offer our apologies.' Indeed, the bishops have admitted that it would be unfair to judge the movie without seeing it. Moreover, the script was stolen (by whom it is still unclear); it has since been returned to Gibson.

"To continue to attack Mel Gibson for a movie his critics have not seen is bad enough, but to misrepresent the position of the Catholic bishops is worse. Gibson's foes, including most prominently the ADL and Rabbi Marvin Hier, are patently unfair in their assessments of 'The Passion.' Their greatest fear is that because Gibson is a traditional Catholic, he will foment anti-Semitism. Such a perspective completely misunderstands what it is to be a traditional Catholic. It is a prejudice that some Jews need to overcome."