

# CHURCH SCAPEGOATED IN “AMEN”

Greek director Constantin Costa-Gavras' latest movie, "Amen," opened in select theaters on January 24. On January 7, the film was previewed by Catholic League director of communications Louis Giovino; he prepared a report on the movie for Catholic League president William Donohue. The following news release, written by Donohue, is based on Giovino's observations and Donohue's critique of the Catholic Church's response to the Holocaust:

"The need to find a scapegoat for the Holocaust continues with Costa-Gavras' malicious contribution. The movie posits that there was this Jesuit priest who endlessly lobbied Pope Pius XII to do something about the Holocaust. But this is pure fiction: Costa-Gavras readily admits that he literally made up this character to fit the plot. And the plot is that had Pius XII used his bully pulpit to condemn Hitler, the German people would have risen up against him. That there is not a shred of historical evidence to support this fantastic claim does not seem to matter. What matters is that the Catholic Church be indicted for passivity.

"Those who know this period know that leading American Jews and Jewish organizations were opposed to mass demonstrations against Hitler in American cities because they might agitate the Nazis. It is also true that American Jews worked against immigration reforms that would alleviate the plight of German Jews. But this chapter in history is absent from 'Amen.' To include it might obstruct the film's purpose.

"The film also suggests that only Jewish converts to Catholicism were saved by the Vatican when the Nazis invaded Rome. This is a lie. Indeed, nowhere in Europe were more Jews saved—85 percent—than in Italy. False baptismal certificates were issued; the Vatican was opened to Jews; priests and nuns hid Jews in monasteries and convents; and so on.

"The most disturbing aspect of this movie is the unreflective assumption of many movie-goers that what is being depicted is true. That they have been taken to the cleaners intellectually is something that will forever escape them."