

CRITICS OF “THE PASSION” PLAY DIRTY

Catholic League president William Donohue spoke today about some of the critics of the Mel Gibson movie, “The Passion of the Christ”:

“It is one thing to criticize a movie, quite another to engage in vicious *ad hominem* attacks on the person behind the film. To be specific, Rabbi Marvin Hier of the Simon Wiesenthal Center is quoted in today’s *Daily Variety* saying that ‘No responsible Jew has made the accusation that Gibson is an anti-Semite.’ Wrong. On September 19, Abraham Foxman, national director of the ADL, said Gibson is ‘painting a portrait of an anti-Semite.’ On the same day Foxman added that Gibson ‘entertains views that can only be described as anti-Semitic.’ And on November 7, Foxman said the following: ‘I think he’s infected—seriously infected—with some very, very serious anti-Semitic views...[Gibson’s] got classical anti-Semitic views.’ Sounds like an indictment to us.

“Then there are the smear merchants who attack Mel’s father. In an interview that appeared last March in the *New York Times Magazine*, Hutton Gibson questioned the figure of 6 million Jews killed in the Holocaust, something many Jewish scholars have done. He did not *deny* the Holocaust, though it has often been reported that way. But why do the comments of a man who is in his mid-80s, and who has nothing to do with the film, matter so much? Unless, of course, the name of the game is to brand both Mel and his father as bigots. Even as recently as January 23, we were questioned by a producer at CBS about Mel’s father. We were asked whether he is a Holocaust denier; what his reaction to the film is; and whether he is a member of the Catholic League.

“And consider this: when Rabbi Hier was asked on MSNBC to

comment on the film, he directed his comments at Mel, not the movie. Referring to the *Times Magazine* piece, he said, 'Gibson made it very clear that he wants to go back to the good old days, before, he says, the Catholic Church was spoiled by Vatican II.' In short, beware of Latin Mass Catholics—they don't like Jews.

"This movie should be subjected to the same kind of artistic scrutiny that accompanies any film. But the *ad hominem* attacks must stop."