

# JEWISH GROUPS ATTACK MEL GIBSON

Ever since actor Mel Gibson announced he was going to make a movie about the suffering of Jesus, Jewish groups have taken aim at him. They maintain they are worried that the film, "The Passion," will ignite anti-Semitism. Leading the charge has been the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) in New York and the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles. Leading the defense of Gibson has been the Catholic League.

On June 11, William Donohue debated Rabbi Marvin Hier of the Simon Wiesenthal Center on the MSNBC TV show, "Scarborough Country." Donohue said that if someone were to blame "the Jews" for the death of Christ, he would take exception to it "because that is a collective statement which can be read by anti-Semites to include current day Jews." On the other hand, Donohue said that those who were calling for Christ's crucifixion "weren't the Aleutian Islanders. They weren't the Pacific Islanders. It wasn't the Puerto Ricans."

Donohue objected to those who want to "sanitize history." He pointedly cited Jewish author Daniel Goldhagen as "a notorious anti-Catholic bigot." Goldhagen blames Pope Pius XII for the Holocaust and wants the New Testament reworked.

Two weeks later, the ADL attacked Gibson (this wasn't the first time). We answered with the following statement to the media:

"In its news release of June 24, the ADL seriously misrepresented the position of the Catholic bishops regarding 'The Passion.' It said that it had 'joined with the Secretariat of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in April, 2003 to assemble Jewish and Catholic scholars to evaluate an early

version of the movie's screenplay.' It then said it welcomed the remarks by the Catholic scholars. But what it didn't say is telling.

"The ADL did not say that the Catholic panel was unauthorized by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). Nor did it say that the USCCB has since apologized to Mel Gibson for reviewing a movie it hasn't seen. Nor did it say that the script was stolen. Nor did it say that both the ADL and the USCCB have returned the stolen screenplay to Gibson's Icon Productions.

"One person who has seen the movie, and has translated it into Aramaic and Latin, is Jesuit Father William J. Fulco, a National Endowment for the Humanities professor of ancient Mediterranean studies at Loyola Marymount University. He not only insists that the ADL has nothing to worry about—'there is no hint of deicide'—he also says that the specific concerns raised by the ADL are baseless. Is there brutality in the film? Yes. Indeed, it would be historically dishonest to portray the crucifixion in a non-violent manner.

"Every Sunday Catholics recite the 1,700 year-old Nicene Creed, and every time they do they mention that Jesus was 'crucified under Pontius Pilate.' They do not say Jesus was killed by the Romans. Nor do they say He was killed by the Jews. They individualize the guilt. That anti-Semitic Christians have sought to blame 'the Jews' deserves condemnation. But fairness dictates that Gibson not be put in that camp. As he has said, 'Neither I nor my film is anti-Semitic.' That's good enough for the Catholic League and, we trust, for fair-minded Americans of every religion."

Stay tuned for this one. The Catholic League is not going to back down in its defense of Gibson.