

# MORE LIES ABOUT “PHILOMENA”

Although the movie “Philomena” received four Oscar nominations, it did not win a single award. The film was shut out despite the fact that numerous lies were spread about it. The *New York Times* said it was a contender because one of its “advantages” was “its backing by the Weinstein Company, which even orchestrated an audience with Pope Francis.”

It is true that the Weinstein boys, Harvey and Bob, spent an enormous amount of money lobbying this movie. The non-stop ads in the *New York Times*, multiple each day, and in every section of the paper, were just one index. The lavish parties that Harvey Weinstein throws in Hollywood—everyone wants an invitation—also positioned him to score. While this may have gone down well with those in Tinseltown, it did not sit well in the Vatican.

Father Frederico Lombardi, head of the Holy See Press Office, explicitly said that the pope would not see the movie. Furthermore, he took umbrage at those who were exploiting the pope to cash in on the film. According to Lombardi, “It is also important to avoid using the pope as part of a marketing strategy,” he said.

Regarding the so-called meeting of Philomena Lee and Pope Francis, she was denied a private audience; all she got was a pass to join the general audience. According to Vatican Radio, in the nine months that he was the pope in 2013, “over 6.6 million people attended events led by Pope Francis at the Vatican.” Of that number, 1.5 million attended the pope’s weekly general audience. Philomena Lee was one of the 1.5 million people who “met” the pope.

Recently, the website of “People” quoted the 80-year-old Philomena Lee as saying, “I’m thankful and happy I did find him [her son], and that’s all I ever wanted to do.”

Similarly, in the entertainment section of "Time," it was written, "Many other Irish women found themselves in similar situations [pregnant out-of-wedlock at age 18 in 1952] but, unlike Lee, never managed to find the children who were taken from them."

All of this was a lie because Philomena Lee never found her son: he died in 1995 and was buried on the grounds at the very convent that took her in when she was in need. She was lying about this because it fit with the lie about her looking frantically for him for 50 years. In the movie, she was depicted as searching for her son in the United States.

Philomena Lee never set foot in the United States until last November when she went to Los Angeles to hawk her movie. Indeed, Philomena never even bothered to tell her daughter, Jane, about the brother she never knew she had until Philomena had too much to drink at a Christmas party in 2004.

Kevin Cullen of the *Boston Globe* added to the lies when he said the nuns "gave him [the son] away to an American family behind Philomena's back." In fact, Philomena voluntarily signed adoption papers relinquishing custody of her son when she was 22 years of age.

None of this was done by accident. It is as deliberate as it is malicious.

Steve Coogan, a producer and screenplay writer for the film "Philomena," was recently quoted in *The Sunday Times* (of London) as saying that the nuns asked Philomena Lee's son, Anthony, "to pay thousands of pounds to be buried" on the grounds of Sean Ross Abbey. "We didn't put that in the film. We were restrained." He also stated that "The film offers an olive branch to the church in showing Philomena's forgiveness. She dignifies her religion."

Furthermore, Steve Coogan concluded his remarks with this gem: "The Catholic League is a conservative wing of the Catholic

church. They say no fee was charged for Anthony's adoption, but they [the nuns] did ask for a large donation. Well, call me stupid, but that sounds like a financial transaction."

Sister Julie Rose, an official at the convent in question, flatly denied charging a fee. "No children were sold by any mother or the congregation, to any party, nor did the congregation receive any monies in relation to adoption while we were running the mother and baby home." Even the author of the book upon which "Philomena" is based admits that it was "customary for the adopting party to make a donation," but that it was not mandatory.

So, yes, anyone who cannot distinguish between a fee and a donation is, in fact, stupid. On that we agree.

Coogan was also a guest of Bill Maher on his HBO show, "Real Time with Bill Maher." Maher said there were 60,000 Philomenas in Ireland, women who had children out-of-wedlock and gave their children up for adoption. Coogan claimed they were "maltreated and eventually their babies were sold to Americans."

Bill Maher also said that Philomena Lee "looks like a slave in the movie," stating she worked long hours in the laundries. Coogan went further by contending that the women "were victims of actual slavery," and were "incarcerated against their will."

No woman was ever incarcerated against her will in any of the laundries: *every last one of the women came to the nuns—the nuns did not fetch the troubled women.*

Moreover, they were not mistreated, never mind enslaved, and no babies were sold. How do we know this? One year ago, the Irish government released the McAleese Report on the Magdalene Laundries: it debunks these myths, and many more, yet people like Maher and Coogan have continued to promote them.

Maier also said that “every time I do something on the Catholic Church, the head of the Catholic Church, William Donohue, wants to fight me, actually fight me (he puts his fists up). A 58-year-old guy and a 65-year-old guy—it’s gonna be a really good match.”

Donohue didn’t know he was “the head of the Catholic Church,” but in any event, he is now a year older. Donohue did offer to box him a few years ago when he was on with Megyn Kelly; Maier told Larry King that Donohue threatened him with violence! The offer still stands—get the Everlast ready.

*The Independent.ie* (Irish Independent) ran a story by Liz O’Donnell on “Philomena” saying that Philomena Lee’s “child was stolen by the nuns.” This is incorrect: the 18-year-old Lee, pregnant out-of-wedlock, was taken to the nuns by her widowed father, hoping they would care for the baby. They did. At age 22, Lee voluntarily signed a contract awarding the nuns her son. The nuns then got her a job. That is the undisputed truth.

At the British Academy of Film and Television Arts awards, “Philomena” won the Adapted Screenplay prize. Dame Judi Dench, who played Philomena Lee, did not win Best Actress, but had they had an award for Biggest Fool, she would have won going away: at the awards ceremony, she flashed her butt in front of Oprah Winfrey; tattooed on it was the name Weinstein, in reference to the film’s distributor, Harvey Weinstein. Dench is 79.

“Good Morning America” on ABC also interviewed Coogan; In the voice over, the following was said: “Philomena is based on a true story about an Irishwoman played by Judi Dench who travels to the U.S. to track down the son she was forced to give up for adoption when she was a teenager.”

In his remarks, Coogan said that 50 years ago in Ireland, women who were pregnant out-of-wedlock, and abandoned by their

family, would go to homes run by nuns where “your child would be sold to Catholic, often American, wealthy American couples.”

In regards to the lie that Philomena went to the United States to look for her son, here is what Suzanne Daley and Douglas Dalby wrote in the *New York Times* on November 29, 2013: “In fact, much of the movie is a fictionalized version of events. Ms. Lee, for instance, never went to the U.S. to look for her son with Mr. Sixsmith, who is played by Steve Coogan, a central part of the film.”

Not only did Philomena Lee voluntarily sign an oath when she was 22 giving her son up for adoption, in the film itself, Dench says, “No one coerced me. I signed of my own free will.”

Regarding the lie about Philomena’s baby being sold, in the book by Martin Sixsmith upon which the film is based, he states that, “While neither the NCCC [National Conference of Catholic Charities] nor Sean Ross Abbey [the convent where Philomena resided] charge any fees, it is customary for the adopting party to make a donation...” Moreover, the nuns at the abbey today insist that no fee was charged.

These lies were aided and abetted by many in the media, for reasons that only underscore the existence of the Catholic League.

In a recent news story by BBC, Chris Buckler, the BBC Ireland Correspondent, wrote Philomena Lee’s child was “taken away from her. When her son Anthony was three-and-a-half years old, the nuns in the convent gave him up for adoption to an American couple. *It all happened behind Philomena’s back.*” (Donohue’s italics.)

This is a lie. The proof is the oath that Philomena signed. Here is what it said:

“That I am the mother of Anthony Lee who was born to me out of

wedlock at Sean Ross Abbey, Roscrea, Co. Tipperary, Ireland, on 5th July 1952.

"That I hereby relinquish full claim forever to my said child Anthony Lee and surrender said child to Sister Barbara, Superioress of Sean Ross Abbey, Roscrea, Co. Tipperary, Ireland.

"The purpose of this relinquishment is to enable Sister Barbara to make my child available for adoption to any person she considers fit and proper inside or outside the state.

"That I further undertake never to attempt to see, interfere with or make any claim to the said child at any future time."

This oath was signed by Philomena Lee. Below her signature, it says:

"Subscribed and sworn to by the said Philomena Lee as her free act and deed this 27th day of June 1955." Signed, Desmond A. Houlihan, notary public.

The Catholic League has greatly emphasized the fact that Philomena was not a child when she voluntarily put her son up for adoption—she was 22. Anyone who doubts what has been said should read p. 51 in Martin Sixsmith's book, *Philomena*. While he was a major part of the spin game regarding *Philomena*, the oath that he reprinted settles the argument: her baby was not "forcibly taken" and nothing happened "behind her back."