

MGM BOMBS WITH "STIGMATA"

Tamara Collins, a research analyst at the Catholic League, previewed the MGM movie "Stigmata" and labeled it "an anti-Catholic bomb of a movie." The film, which opened September 10, was an attempt to use a supernatural thriller as a vehicle for making a political attack on the Catholic Church. Well before it opened, *Entertainment Weekly* said that the movie would "give the Catholic League a conniption."

"The thrust of the plot," said Collins, "is that there exists a lost gospel of Christ, whose message—that the kingdom of God is inside us and all around us, not in buildings made of stone—would thoroughly undermine the legitimacy of the Catholic Church. Naturally, Church officials, hell-bent on preserving their power, will stop at nothing (including violence, if necessary) to suppress this gospel."

Collins added that "Particularly insidious were the references to such Catholic figures as Padre Pio and St. Francis of Assisi."

In a release to the media, the league offered this account:

"MGM risks attenuating its prestige by backing such an outlandishly gory an insidious film as 'Stigmata.' The idea that salvation can best be achieved by rejecting the Catholic Church is and old and very tired idea. The good news is that there exists a small audience for such an exploitative film, and all the hype and technical effects in the world can do nothing to redeem this bomb of a movie."

The Catholic League is delighted that some film critics actually branded "Stigmata" anti-Catholic. The *New York Post* labeled it "jaw-droppingly anti-Catholic," *USA Today* branded it "an anti-Catholic screed masquerading as a horror film" and the *Washington Post* blasted it as "a vicious anti-Catholic diatribe disguised as an audition tape for MTV."

We couldn't help but notice that neither the *New York Times* nor Ted Turner's CNN found "Stigmata" to be anti-Catholic.