

# MUSEUM OF MODERN ART'S EASTER PRESENT: "THE POPE'S TOILET"

During Holy Week, New York City's Museum of Modern Art featured the film, "The Pope's Toilet." Filmed in Spanish with English subtitles, the movie revolves around a visit by Pope John Paul II to the poor town of Melo, Uruguay near the Brazilian border. Anticipating the arrival of the pope, townspeople become vendors hawking food and drinks. One of them decides to cash in on the food consumption and sets up a pay public restroom. The film is the work of two Uruguayans: writer Enrique Fernández and cinematographer César Charlone.

This movie wouldn't have caught our attention except for its venue and timing. The movie, which debuted two years ago, was deliberately shown during Holy Week and ended on Easter Monday. Also, it's not as if it was being shown at some run-down theatre, it was showcased at the Museum of Modern Art.

The *New York Times* said the film takes an "oblique dig at a church that, the movie suggests, may have failed its most disadvantaged followers." When it was shown at a Toronto Film Festival, it was described as blending "the sacred and profane." Which explains why V.A. Musetto of the *New York Post*—who has never found a Catholic-bashing flick he didn't love—gave it three stars.

The person responsible for all of this is Laurence Kardish, senior curator in the Department of Film at the Museum of Modern Art. He didn't choose this film without deliberation. Indeed, he admits to previewing "more films than there are hours in the year." And "The Pope's Toilet" beat out all competitors. We checked to see what Muslims were treated to at Ramadan and found that "Hollywood on the Hudson: Filmmaking in New York, 1920-39" was featured then. When Jews celebrated Yom Kippur, a movie about African patriarchy was shown,

“Delwende.” Which makes his choice of “The Pope’s Toilet” at Eastertime take on greater meaning.