

“PASSION” CRITICS EVINCE NEW PURITANISM

Catholic League president William Donohue commented today on how film critics of “The Passion of the Christ” are reacting to the movie:

“Having failed to tag the movie as anti-Semitic, those who hate everything about Mel’s masterpiece are trying to convince the public not to see it because it’s too violent. Alas, there is a New Puritanism in the land. Violence has now joined cigarettes as the new taboo.

“But as it turns out, violence, like cholesterol, can be both good and bad. Consider New York *Daily News* reporter Jami Bernard. She voted the super-violent flick, ‘Gladiator,’ best picture for the year 2000. But she brands Mel’s film, ‘a compendium of tortures that would horrify the regulars at an S&M club.’ Yet she is a big fan of the Marquis de Sade—the pervert who wrote the book on S&M—and that is why she liked ‘Quills.’ Peter Rainer also condemns Mel’s movie for delving into ‘the realm of sadomasochism.’ Yet he commended Spielberg for the ‘gentleness’ he brought to ‘Saving Private Ryan.’

“Richard Corliss of *Time* thinks the only people who will be drawn to ‘The Passion’ are those ‘who can stand to be grossed out as they are edified.’ Yet he calls the ‘body halvings, decapitations, [and] unhandings’ of ‘Gladiator’ a ‘pleasure that we get to watch.’ *Newsweek*’s David Ansen says Mel’s film will ‘inspire nightmares,’ though he hails as ‘a must-see’ movie a flick about incest (‘The Dreamers’). David Denby of the *New Yorkercites* ‘The Passion’ as being so violent it ‘falls into the danger of altering Jesus’ message of love into one of hate.’ This is the same guy who said of ‘Schindler’s List’ that ‘the violence [is] neither exaggerated nor minimized.’

"The New Puritans will not win this one. The public does not share their deep-seated aversion to religion nor their phony pacifism."