

PHILOMENA AND THE POPE



Bill Donohue discusses the latest lies about “Philomena”:

Today’s *New York Times* rates “Philomena” as a contender to “12 Years a Slave” for Best Adapted Screenplay; it says it has no chance of winning an Oscar in three other categories where it received a nomination. It says it is a contender because one of its “advantages” is “its backing by the Weinstein Company, which even orchestrated an audience with Pope Francis.”

It is true that the Weinstein boys, Harvey and Bob, have 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, are just one index. The lavish parties that Harvey throws in Hollywood—everyone wants an invitation—also position him to score. While this may go down well with those in Tinseltown, it does 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, and he took umbrage at those who were exploiting the pope to cash in on the film. “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.

Not sure how many children “meet” Santa at Macy’s each year, but at least they can be forgiven for hyping their encounter. More important, they actually spend more time with him than Philomena spent with the pope.