

POPE GIVES KUDOS TO MEL GIBSON'S MOVIE

Catholic League president William Donohue issued the following remarks today on word that Pope John Paul II has given his approval to the Mel Gibson movie, "The Passion of the Christ":

"Pope John Paul II has seen Mel's masterpiece and, like virtually everyone else, likes what he has seen. He expressly said, 'It is as it was.' The immediate fallout on Mel's critics—the ones who hate the film without having seen it—is not known. That is because they are divided into two camps: Jewish activists who are genuinely concerned about anti-Semitism, and an ad hoc group of Catholic and Jewish theologians who have an agenda.

"In the first camp are people like Dov Hikind, a Jewish state legislator from New York. Hikind worries that the film might incite anti-Semitism. Having seen the movie twice myself, I have tried to convince him that his fears are unfounded. He has, quite correctly, said that this is something he must determine for himself. It is my hope that he will reach the same conclusion I have. But even if he does not, he commands my respect and support. As I have said many times over the past few months, I can certainly appreciate why there may be a certain degree of apprehension in the Jewish community over this movie—I, too, would be wary if I were Jewish. Fortunately, the film engenders sacrifice and love, not hate.

"The other camp is a different story altogether. Some members of the ad hoc committee, like Paula Fredriksen, have accused Gibson of promoting violence. Another, John Pawlikowski, has blasted the Catholic League for defending Mel, calling him 'a

heretic.' Moreover, Philip Cunningham and Sister Mary Boys have joined the other two in denouncing Gibson for allegedly violating their own trumped up rules governing depictions of the Passion. Acting like the proponents of a neo-Hays code, they arrogantly think Mel should have had to run the film by them for approval. He doesn't need to—the pope's on board.

"This latter group has two choices: they can either find a spider hole and crawl in it, or they can just keep on talking. Call it a Hobson's choice."