

REACTION TO MEL GIBSON'S FILM REACHES HYSTERICAL LEVEL

The Catholic League has learned that New York State Assemblyman Dov Hikind has planned a press conference tomorrow to demand that 20th Century Fox not distribute Mel Gibson's film "The Passion." Hikind asserts that the film "resurrects the age-old canard of deicide," flouting the Vatican's 1965 declaration *Nostra Aetate*, which denied that all Jewish people were responsible for the death of Jesus. He has also charged that the film "can incite anti-Semitic violence."

Catholic League president William A. Donohue addressed this matter today:

"The furor over Mel Gibson's film has now reached a fever pitch. Assemblyman Hikind's response is an example of how reaction to 'The Passion' has spilled into hysteria.

"Assemblyman Hikind has alleged that the movie implicates all Jews in the crucifixion, a common misconception of those who haven't seen the movie. In fact, absolutely nothing in the film is inconsistent with *Nostra Aetate*, which repudiated the idea of collective guilt of the Jewish people for Jesus' death.

"The contention that the film 'will spur anti-Semitic fervor' is nonsense. Jack Valenti, president of the Motion Picture Association of America, after seeing the film, commented, 'You can quote me—Mel Gibson's 'The Passion' is not anti-Semitic. I did not see any anti-Semitism in it.' If the Catholic League for one moment thought this would inspire anti-Semitism, it would condemn the movie. Indeed, just last year, the league joined with Dov Hikind and other Jews in calling for a boycott of New York's Jewish Museum, which exhibited art that trivialized the Holocaust.

“Having seen the movie twice, I agree with the hundreds of Catholics, Protestants, and Jews who have now seen ‘The Passion.’ It is near unanimous: this movie will not foment anti-Semitism. Any such blind charges are vacuous.”