

FOX NEWS TWISTS FACTS ON GIBSON FILM

The Fox News Channel website has an article today by Roger Friedman that takes Mel Gibson to task for selectively distributing "The Passion of the Christ." After detailing where the movie will be shown, he then says Gibson "consciously created a divisive atmosphere for the presentation of his film." He also charges, "All this seems designed to keep 'The Passion of the Christ' out of neighborhoods that are considered Jewish, upscale, or liberal."

Here's how Catholic League president William Donohue responded:

"Roger Friedman says the movie will be shown in two Chicago theaters; in fact it will be shown in seven. He says it will not be shown in the L.A. neighborhood of Century City; in fact it will be shown at the AMC in Century City. He says it will not be shown in the 'wealthier and trendier parts' of Los Angeles; in fact it will be shown in Marina del Rey, Burbank and Santa Monica. He says it will not be shown in New York's Upper West Side; in fact it will be shown at 86th and Broadway. He says it will be shown only in the 'fringe areas' of the Upper East Side; in fact it will be shown at 86th and 3rd and 64th and 2nd. He says it will be shown at one theater below 34th Street; in fact it will be shown at three. He says it will be hard to find in Nassau County, Long Island; in fact it will be shown in seven theaters there. He says that theater-goers will be 'hard pressed' to find it in 'either the south or north shore' of Long Island; in fact it will be shown in towns like Glen Cove and Port Washington on the north shore and Merrick and Seaford on the south shore. He says those who

live in Westchester will also find it difficult to see the movie; in fact it will be shown in Larchmont, New Rochelle and Yonkers. And so on.

“Taking a course in Geography 101 might cure some of Friedman’s problems, but it would not be enough. That’s because his forced conclusion suggests something else is at work: to say that Gibson is intentionally keeping the film away from Jews and the rich is not only flatly wrong, it smacks of malice. We look for Fox to correct itself.”

IS MEL AN ANTI-SEMITES?

Catholic League president William Donohue commented today on the way ADL national director Abraham Foxman has handled questions on Mel Gibson’s alleged anti-Semitism:

“Foxman is an Orwellian genius at having it both ways. When directly asked whether Mel is an anti-Semite, he never says he is. But then Foxman proceeds to indict him anyway. For example, on September 19 the ADL leader was quoted by the Associated Press saying, ‘[Mel Gibson] entertains views that can only be described as anti-Semitic.’ On November 7, Foxman was quoted by Cybercast News Service saying, ‘I think he’s [Gibson] infected—seriously infected—with some very, very serious anti-Semitic views. [Gibson’s] got classical anti-Semitic views.’

“Foxman just got back from the Breakers in Palm Beach where the ADL had an executive meeting. He released a statement yesterday that was textbook doublespeak: ‘Is Mel Gibson an anti-Semite? No. He’s a true believer. Is his anti-Semitism

intentional? I don't believe so.'

"Now let's see how this magisterial logic sounds when applied to Foxman. Imagine if someone said, 'Is Abraham Foxman an anti-Catholic? No. He's a true believer. Is his anti-Catholicism intentional? I don't believe so.'

"Is there any doubt that Foxman would conclude that he's just been branded anti-Catholic?

"It's time to stop the dance. If Gibson is an anti-Semite, Foxman should not hesitate to call him one (and provide the evidence). But if he's not—if his biggest sin is that he made a movie that doesn't sit well with Foxman—then it's irresponsible to suggest he is."

LAST-DITCH ATTEMPT TO SMEAR BISHOP MURPHY

Laura A. Ahearn is holding a press conference today in Stony Brook, Long Island, the purpose of which is to charge Rockville Centre Bishop William F. Murphy of conspiring to squash a criminal investigation of child sexual abuse. Ahearn, director of Parents for Megan's Law, says she spent a week in Boston researching Bishop Murphy's role in the Boston sex abuse scandal. She claims to have evidence of his wrongdoing while serving in Boston.

Catholic League president William Donohue isn't impressed:

"Laura A. Ahearn postures herself as a tireless champion of

children whose only motive is justice. No doubt the social worker has done some good work. But her resume also has all the marks of a zealot.

“It did not sit well with Ahearn when the Diocese of Rockville Centre did not award her a contract for her workshops. More important, Ahearn previously scoffed at the Church’s claim that certain reporting laws would compromise the confessional. Also telling is her unwillingness to cite the role homosexuals have played in the scandal. Now anyone who treats the sanctity of the confessional in a cavalier fashion is no friend of the Catholic Church. Moreover, anyone who maintains that homosexuals did not play a major role in the scandal is living in utter denial.

“It is striking that the report issued by Massachusetts Attorney General Thomas Reilly on the Boston Archdiocese didn’t lay a glove on Bishop Murphy. We are now to believe that a woman from Long Island, armed with her masters in social work, has found evidence of Murphy’s culpability that escaped the army of lawyers working for the Massachusetts Attorney General. And it only took her a week to do so!

“When Ahearn addresses her friends in Voice of the Faithful on February 12, she will find a sympathetic audience. But unless she is really living in la-la-land, she should not expect most Catholics to pay her any heed. It’s time Ahearn, and everyone else out to get Murphy, packed it in.”

WILL JEWS BE ASSAULTED AFTER

“THE PASSION”?

Catholic League president William Donohue offered the following reply to the question posed in this news release:

“After the Mel Gibson movie, ‘The Passion of the Christ,’ opens on February 25, some are saying that Jews may be attacked by Christians. No one has raised the specter of violence more than ADL director Abraham Foxman. On January 23, in the *Los Angeles Times*, he accused Gibson of ‘hawking it [the film] on a commercial crusade to the churches of this country. That’s what makes it dangerous.’ Not only has Foxman not responded to my request for an apology, he has upped the ante.

“A recent ADL fundraising letter read, ‘Of great concern to the Anti-Defamation League is the possibility that individuals are more likely to be targets of attack, simply because they are ‘different.’ On February 7, in the pages of the *Detroit Free Press*, he was more explicit. Commenting on Passion Plays throughout the centuries, Foxman opined, ‘We know those plays rationalized anti-Semitic behavior. We fear this will, too.’

“The nation’s leading scholar on Passion Plays is Columbia University professor James Shapiro, author of *Oberammergau: The Troubling Story of the World’s Most Famous Passion Play*. I asked him last week when was the last time Jews were beaten up after a Passion Play. Aside from one Catholic convert in Nazi Germany who was attacked, we have to go back to the Middle Ages to find examples. And in the U.S., there is no record of violence against Jews following any Passion Play. In short, there is no need to call out the National Guard.

“Foxman is worried about more than violence. On February 7, he was quoted in the *Orlando Sentinel* saying Gibson’s work ‘is not being sold as a movie. It’s being sold as a religious experience, as a pilgrimage, as a way back to faith.’

“So this is Foxman’s worst nightmare: Gibson’s film might actually inspire lapsed Christians to return to the faith. That says it all.”

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

In response to the demagogic remarks made by some critics of the Mel Gibson movie, “The Passion of the Christ,” Catholic League president William Donohue has written “An Open Letter to the Jewish Community.” The six-page missive offers Donohue’s thoughts on the anti-Christian remarks of ADL director Abraham Foxman and others.

The letter has been sent to major Jewish organizations throughout the U.S. and to prominent Jewish individuals. It has also been sent to a select group of American bishops and Catholic and Protestant leaders.

The letter is available online at www.catholicleague.org.

**CATHOLIC LEAGUE ISSUES
SPECIAL REPORT – SEXUAL ABUSE
IN SOCIAL CONTEXT: CATHOLIC**

CLERGY AND OTHER PROFESSIONALS

The Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights has released a special report on sexual abuse; it has been sent to every bishop in the U.S. and to many in the media. The report, "Sexual Abuse in Social Context: Catholic Clergy and Other Professionals," was written by Catholic League president William A. Donohue.

The report was written to facilitate the discussion that will inevitably follow the February 27 release of two reports by John Jay College of Criminal Justice. At the behest of the bishops, professors from John Jay undertook a national study on the extent of sexual abuse of minors by priests since 1950; they will also release a report on the causes and consequences of the abuse crisis.

Donohue says in the Preface of the report that "to discuss the incidence of sexual abuse committed by Roman Catholic priests without reference to the level of offense found among the clergy of other religions, or to that of other professionals, is grossly unfair." He emphasizes, "It is the belief of the Catholic League that no meaningful conversation can take place on this issue without having some baseline data regarding the incidence of abuse that occurs outside the Catholic Church."

The central finding of the report is that the sexual abuse of minors is most likely to take place in the home. Among professionals, the incidence of sexual abuse is slightly higher among the Protestant clergy, and it is significantly higher among public school teachers, than among the Catholic clergy.

Another problem that may surface once the John Jay study is released is the possibility that members of religious orders

may be counted twice: once by their local diocese, and once by their own report.

Those in the media who would like a copy of this report should contact the Catholic League at 212-371-3191. It is also available online at www.catholicleague.org.