

MORE ROTTEN MOVIES

Some anti-Catholic movies that have recently been released have one thing in common: they're rotten to the core. Indeed, they are so bad, artistically that is, that even those critics not bothered by the Catholic-bashing elements are complaining.

Take, for example, "The Assumption of the Virgin." It is a BBC movie about the 15th century artist and priest Fra Filippo Lippi and his affair with his nun model. William Donohue was quoted in the *New York Daily News* saying, "The fact that they have to go back six centuries to find some illicit affair between a priest and a nun...tells me something." He also offered some advice to the BBC: "They should explore the sexual abuse by Anglican priests and how they've been predators on a number of women."

Then there's "The Body." This dud is about the supposed finding of the bones of Jesus. Receiving universally poor reviews, the *Los Angeles Times* commented that the film "makes an array of Catholics, Jews and Arabs look bad."

"A Question of Faith" was called by the *Chicago Sun-Times*, "a pointless debacle." It is about a monk who has a vision of the archangel Gabriel. Oh, yes, he manages to have sex with him. The monk then turns into a pregnant woman. This is somehow supposed to be a commentary on homosexuality, women, and abortion. Most reviewers just found it silly.

In our estimation, "One Night at McCool's" gets the prize for the most rotten of them all.

Catholic League researcher Louis Giovino suffered through a showing of the film. Utilizing every clichéd film device seen countless times before, the film is loaded with gratuitous sex and violence. Amidst the plot holes and vapid script there is a fidgeting, drooling priest. After the wafer contents are thrown out of a ciborium, the priest is shown pouring whiskey

in it and taking a swill. The audience is also treated to another tired caricature of a sexually repressed priest who loves to hear graphic conversations about sex.

Most reviewers panned the movie, but only one, Jonathan Foreman of the *New York Post*, nailed it for its anti-Catholicism. He commented that the portrayal of the priest is “yet another cheap Hollywood jibe at the expense of the Catholic Church.” That other reviewers didn’t remark on this aspect of the movie tells us more about them than we care to know.

The position of the Catholic League is to criticize Catholic-bashing movies even when they lack artistic merit. Sure, it tempers our outrage to know that the film in question is a flop, but we’re not here to make artistic judgments. Our job is to make judgments about those who seek to ridicule or insult Catholicism.

We await the day when movie critics in general will be so put off by a film’s anti-Catholicism that it will prove determinative in their review. So far we can’t think of one that has garnered this response.

ADL BLAMES POPE

When the pope went to the Middle East in May, two Syrian leaders made anti-Semitic remarks in his presence. On May 13, the ADL ran an ad in the *New York Times* blaming the pope for not confronting the leaders. It ended by saying, “Pope John Paul II, we were greatly saddened by your silence.”

We learned of the ad two days before it ran and immediately issued a comment to the media. Of special interest to us was

the invidious charge of “silence,” an obvious reference to the alleged silence of Pope Pius XII during the Holocaust. We sided with Eugene Fisher, the interreligious relations director for the U.S. bishops, who wrote “For Catholics, the phrase ‘the silence of the pope’ has become so encrusted with bitterness and controversy that its use is increasingly perceived by us as an insult motivated by anti-Catholicism.”

We beckoned the ADL to stop with the “it’s never enough” refrain. We added that, “The pope is a world traveler who hears offensive things said all the time—about his religion and that of others.” We even offered a reality check: “Now according to the ADL’s logic, the pope is guilty of anti-Catholicism for remaining silent when Orthodox priests and monks in Greece recently called him the ‘grotesque, two-horned monster of Rome’ and ‘the anti-Christ.’”

We concluded our remarks reminding the ADL of the obvious. “Finally,” we said, “what about the Holy Father’s voluminous statements, writings and diplomatic efforts condemning anti-Semitism? Does this carry any weight with the ADL? If so, they shouldn’t be so quick to second-guess. If not, why not?”

We are pleased to note that our friends at Toward Tradition, Rabbi Daniel Lapin and Yarden Weidenfeld, criticized the ADL for its “needless attack on Pope John Paul II.”

SAGA OF A SORE LOSER

Jim Dempsey didn’t like the fact that his boss had to apologize for his behavior, so he quit. Well, almost. In fact, Dempsey, a columnist for the *Telegram & Gazette* in stepped down to become a reporter at the Worcester, Massachusetts daily.. Here’s what happened.

On April 20, Dempsey wrote what he called a satirical piece but what others, including the Catholic League, saw as a below-the-belt attack on Catholic priests. As it happened, there was to be a motorcycle biker's convention in Worcester and Dempsey took the occasion to write a column describing what it would be like if it were priests who were having the convention. In his article, Dempsey wrote that the priests would be going to bars and would be engaged in all kinds of mayhem. Then when they leave, Dempsey said, "we'll have the problem of swaggering, cigarette-puffing altar boys to deal with."

In an aside, Dempsey mentions that the priests will go to Holy Cross for a concert. "By the way," he writes, "did anyone else find it amusing as I did, back in February, when Holy Cross banned a church from campus for being 'cult-like.'? A school founded by celibate men in black shirts calling another organization a cult? Hello!"

The next day, the editor, Harry Whitin, apologized. "Let's not mince words: In my opinion, the humor failed. His [Dempsey's] column did not come across as funny or even satirical. Instead it came across as mean-spirited, anti-Catholic and crude." He ended by saying, "To those who were offended, please consider this our official apology. No offense was intended, but it is easy to see how offense could be taken."

The apology didn't come any time too soon. William Donohue was ready to unload on the newspaper when he found out that Whitin had already apologized. Donohue called Whitin's office to congratulate him for doing the right thing.

Dempsey, however, was furious. He was angry with his boss and so he resigned as a columnist and took a position as a reporter. Now had he had real guts, he would have quit altogether. Instead, this sore loser just throws a temper tantrum and remains on payroll. In any event, score this a victory for our side.

TALK ABOUT CHUTZPAH!

Leader newspapers are published weekly in New Jersey. The editorial of April 26, "Infamous salute in church is in poor taste," was one of the more startling comments we've yet seen.

The editorial commented that in a Mass at St. Mary's in Rutherford on April 22, parishioners were seen raising their right arms in a way that the newspaper likened to a Nazi salute. When a predictable uproar occurred, the newspaper attempted to explain its editorial reaction. But it did so without ever apologizing.

On May 3, in an editorial entitled, "The whole history behind the gesture," the editors actually made matters worse when they said, "If a non-Catholic popped into mass during the blessing, he or she would likely be confused and offended." To which William Donohue replied, "had you not been so ignorant of Roman Catholicism you would never have been offended in the first place."

In Donohue's letter to the newspaper, he also said "Catholics do not need to be lectured by non-Catholics about their religious teachings or practices." Pointing out the obvious, he added, "There are lots of things about every religion that non-adherents might find strange or inexplicable." He concluded by arguing "it is the height of arrogance for those of some other faith—or no faith at all—to demand that someone else's religious practices be tailored to their wishes."

Talk about chutzpah, this one tops them all.

WE TOLD YOU SO

In the May *Catalyst*, we reported that Catholics at the Blaisdell Alcoholic Treatment Unit at the Rockland Psychiatric Center in New York were being denied access to Mass and Confession; they were told they could attend Protestant services. After stating that we had registered a complaint, we ended by saying, “We don’t expect to lose.”

On April 30, a letter was sent to William Donohue by Thomas E. Nightingdale, director of the bureau of addiction and treatment centers explaining that it was all due to a staffing problem. But guess what? It’s being fixed and Catholics will once again be allowed to practice their religion. We told you so.

ANOTHER STATE SCHOOL HOSTS “CORPUS CHRISTI”

The Terrence McNally play about Jesus having sex with the twelve apostles will be performed this summer at Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne (IPFW). The Catholic League entered the fray and immediately drew front-page coverage in local Fort Wayne newspapers.

Six state senators from Indiana raised serious questions regarding the propriety of a state-assisted university hosting an anti-Christian play. They are going to drill Chancellor Michael Wartell when he becomes before asking for more

funding. Interestingly, the students raised money for the play voluntarily. But that didn't stop the league from criticizing the arrangement.

In a statement made to the press, William Donohue said, "Here we go again. Taxpaying Christians are asked to support a school that mocks their religion. It matters not a whit that IPFW is not funding 'Corpus Christi.' What matters is that this public institution is hosting the play." Donohue applauded the six state senators who raised objections to what he termed "this abuse of public financing."

Just as we saw with the situation at Florida Atlantic University, IPFW proudly advertises its commitment to multiculturalism; it even has multiculturalism in its mission statement. Indeed, it has an office of Multicultural Services "to serve as a support system for African American, Hispanic, Native American, International [and] Asian" students. In addition, there is an Islamic Student Association on campus and a "diversity" week that teaches students to be tolerant of homosexuals.

Some would say this is an example of inclusiveness, but it is not: there are no such programs for Christians. Indeed, the fact that IPFW is helping to sponsor Christian bashing, we emphasized, belies its multicultural commitment.

We focused our attention on Chancellor Michael Wartell. Noting that he is casting the issue squarely as an academic freedom matter, we fired back saying that "part of his [Wartell's] academic responsibilities is the promotion of tolerance for everyone, Christians included."

Donohue then made his request. "That is why I am asking him to personally sit down with those associated with the play and discuss how hurtful this exercise in free expression really is to Christians," he said. "After all," he continued, "IPFW's mission statement also mandates that the school strive to

‘reinforce ties to the surrounding community.’ That would seem to include Christians.”

Because Chancellor Wartell has not replied to Donohue, we suggest you write to him as soon as possible. Write to him at Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne, 2101 E. Coliseum Blvd., Fort Wayne, IN 46805. Ask him why he is apparently will not accede to Donohue’s modest request. We are not asking him to pull the play—all we are asking is that he explain to those involved how hurtful their decision to perform this play is to many Christians. If he won’t even do that, then we can only conclude that he supports the play’s message.

HYPOCRISY MARKS THE FORT WAYNE JOURNAL-GAZETTE

On May 2, the Fort Wayne *Journal-Gazette* ran an editorial on the decision of Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne (IPFW) to host the play “Corpus Christi” later this summer. It vigorously supported the position of the school’s chancellor, Michael Wartell, to defend the play as a matter of academic freedom. The editorial also chastised six state senators from Indiana who raised serious questions regarding the propriety of using public monies to host such an anti-Christian event.

We did a quick search of editorials recently published in the *Journal-Gazette* and found just how hypocritical the editors are. So we released a statement to the press, and blanketed the electronic media in Fort Wayne, Indianapolis and South Bend. We are happy to note that Bob Lockwood, who lives

in Fort Wayne, was able to explain the league's position on TV. Here is how we framed the issue:

"On April 17, the *Journal-Gazette* ran an editorial saying, 'It's time for sports teams to rid themselves of Indian nicknames.' It then cited as support for its position a report by the U.S. Civil Rights Commission condemning Indian nicknames. Two days later, there was an editorial on the controversial 'B.C.' comic strip by Johnny Hart that the newspaper ran on Easter Sunday: the cartoon depicted a menorah turning into a cross, symbolizing the transition from Judaism to Christianity. The *Journal-Gazette* warned that it would never publish such a cartoon again and even went so far as to say that by its definition, 'anti-Semitic – or racist or anti-Christian or homophobic – comics can't be 'art' except in some antiseptic, ivory tower and thus irrelevant sense.'

"Now how about that. So it's okay to follow the logic of the Feds in banning Indian nicknames that local high schools adopted long ago, and it's okay to squash a mere cartoon that offends the sensibilities of the editorial staff, but it's not okay to object to staging an anti-Christian play at a state-assisted institution. It's too bad 'Corpus Christi' wasn't a comic strip about a bunch of Indians butchering the white man. Then the sensitivity kings and queens at the *Journal-Gazette* wouldn't hesitate to reach for their censorial swords. But since it's just Christ being defiled, this is simply a First Amendment exercise."

The *Journal-Gazette*, while disagreeing with our criticism, nonetheless printed it in their newspaper.