

“THE MAGDALENE SISTERS”: ANTI-CATHOLIC PROPAGANDA

“The Magdalene Sisters,” a film about the alleged abuse of wayward girls by nuns in Ireland, opened at theaters over the summer. It is the creation of director Peter Mullan and it was distributed by Miramax, a company run by Harvey and Bob Weinstein.

Louis Giovino, director of communications for the Catholic League, saw the movie and provided Catholic League president William Donohue with a report on it. His report found its way into the following news release on the film:

“It was not coincidental that Peter Mullan and the Weinstein brothers should join forces by delivering ‘The Magdalene Sisters.’ It was destined to happen. Mullan has admitted that his movie ‘encapsulates everything that is bad about the Catholic Church’; so much so that he compares the Church to the murderous Taliban. His honesty is appreciated. Less candid are the Weinstein brothers: they still maintain they are not anti-Catholic even though they have given Catholics such gems as ‘Priest,’ ‘Butcher Boy,’ ‘Dogma’ and ‘40 Days and 40 Nights.’ Now they have given Catholics their new prize, ‘The Magdalene Sisters.’

“If someone were to do a movie called ‘The Weinstein Brothers,’ one that focused on their legacy of anti-Catholicism, and sold it as being representative of how Hollywood views Catholics, it would be dishonest. This is exactly what Mullan and the Weinsteins have done in ‘The Magdalene Sisters.’ They have focused on cruel nuns, who surely were atypical, and presented them as being prototypical. That is the gravamen of the Catholic League’s complaint. This is a game that can be played with any demographic group and with any institution. Just gather all

the dirty laundry, pack it tightly, and present it as if it were reality.

“When the film was first released, two members of the board of directors of the Venice Film Festival called it anti-Catholic propaganda. They were right.”

To demonstrate how deep anti-Catholic prejudice is today, consider that several movie reviewers of “The Magdalene Sisters” took the opportunity to make patently Catholic-bashing remarks. A critic for the New York *Daily News* even admitted that the movie was “an overloaded melodrama,” but this didn’t stop him from saying that the Catholic Church “deserves the scorn” anyway.

The reviews were so sensationalistic that we couldn’t resist providing reporters with a useful thought experiment. Here is what we said:

“Imagine an anti-Semitic director who admits he packed into one movie every anti-Semitic theme he could draw on and then gets an anti-Semitic duo to distribute it. Next imagine film critics taking the anti-Semitic propaganda at face value and then offering anti-Semitic remarks in their reviews. Fat chance.

“For example, there will never be a movie about Jewish slumlords in Harlem or Jewish managers of black entertainers in the 20th century. If there were, and if it were to present a wholly one-sided portrait of the worst excesses of how some Jews exploited blacks, the ADL would be up in arms. And rightly so. But luckily for Jews, this is not likely to happen. Catholics are not so lucky—they have to endure Catholic-bashing directors like Peter Mullan shopping his anti-Catholic script to anti-Catholic distributors like Harvey and Bob Weinstein, only to have it reviewed by anti-Catholic critics.”