

“THE NUN” OPENS IN NEW YORK

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on a movie that opened in New York today:

“La Religieuse” (“The Nun”) opens today in New York City for two weeks at the Film Forum. It is based on a novel by the 18th-century French writer, Denis Diderot. The *New York Times* provided almost a half-page review, complete with a large picture of a nun in habit standing behind a jail-like facade.

The French movie, like the book, bashes the Catholic Church. It is reviewed by J. Hoberman, who quotes what the paper’s movie critic, Vincent Canby, said about it when it debuted in 1971. “It’s with pleasure that I report its arrival,” he said.

Hoberman explains why the *Times* is attracted to the movie. Commenting on the central character, Suzanne, he writes, “At her first convent, Suzanne is subject to torture, interrogation and ostracism.” At her second convent, she meets the “flighty libertine abbess” who runs the joint, “experienc[ing] another sort of torment.” Hey, what’s not to like?

There is more to the script than what Hoberman allows.

After Suzanne is forced into the convent by her lousy parents, she is beaten and harassed by evil nuns. When she is transferred to the second convent, she meets a Mother Superior who is—you guessed it—a lesbian. But Suzie wants nothing to do with her advances, and this drives her predator boss insane, followed by death.

Now who would concoct such trash? Why the Enlightenment genius, Diderot, author of the famous *Encyclopedia*, a 35-volume exaltation of reason and knowledge. Like so many of the French intellectuals at the time, he was an atheist, something unappreciated by his parents (they wanted him to become a

priest) and his Jesuit teachers.

What would possess Diderot to paint such a dark picture of nuns? Anger. Anger at the Catholic Church's sexual ethics: He was a womanizer and a libertine, a man whose conception of sexual freedom included a rejection of the taboo against incest. That's right, the same man who condemned fidelity in marriage and the Church's embrace of it, found objections to sexual relations between mothers and their sons to be outdated.

Why is it that so many intellectuals who hate the Church's teachings on sexuality turn out to be either predators or perverts? Maybe someone at the *New York Times* can answer that.