

THE POLITICIZATION OF “SPOTLIGHT”

The movie “Spotlight” was being politicized before it even hit theaters. That, not the movie itself, was always our concern, and that politicization has continued. On the day of the Oscars several weeks ago, actor Mark Ruffalo, one of the stars in the movie, led a rally outside the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels in downtown Los Angeles. Only 20 people attended the protest, which Ruffalo organized with the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP). During the rally, Ruffalo told protesters “I’m here to stand with the survivors and the victims and the people we’ve lost from Catholic priesthood sex abuse.” Ruffalo also posted on his Twitter page, “Standing with the survivors of Priest sexual abuse!” Ruffalo was joined by “Spotlight” director Tom McCarthy and screenwriter Josh Singer during the protest.

When “Spotlight” won an Oscar, producer Michael Sugar took advantage of his appearance on stage to lecture the Church on the abuse scandal that took place almost a half century ago. “This film gave a voice to survivors, and this Oscar amplifies that voice, which we hope will become a choir that will resonate all the way to the Vatican,” he said. He went on to criticize the pope, stating “Pope Francis, it’s time to protect the children and restore the faith.” Backstage, Sugar continued his rant. “I hope that you journalists in here and throughout the world will help resonate our message all the way to the Vatican, and maybe we can have some real change,” he said. “That’s what we hope to accomplish. That’s what this is really about—for all of us is to talk about this film and what happened and because these things are still happening. The story of ‘Spotlight’ has really just begun.”

Afterward Walter Robinson, who led the *Globe* Spotlight team that investigated the scandal in 2002, piled on in claiming

the Church has not addressed the scandal. "We're at a moment now where bishops around the world are praising the film ... signals that perhaps the church will become more serious about dealing with a problem that still continues," he said. And the *National Catholic Reporter* declared in an editorial headline, "Best picture win for 'Spotlight' is fitting humiliation for church."