

VATICAN OFFICIALS GIVE KUDOS TO MEL GIBSON

In what was perhaps the most significant audience to preview the Mel Gibson movie, "The Passion of the Christ," several top Vatican officials gave their unanimous approval to the film. Members of the Vatican Secretariat of State, the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (which oversees doctrinal issues), applauded Gibson for his efforts.

Catholic League president William Donohue offered the following remarks today regarding the story posted on zenit.org:

"It comes as no surprise that senior-ranking Vatican officials would heartily endorse Mel Gibson's, 'The Passion of the Christ.' Father Augustine Di Noia, undersecretary of the doctrinal congregation, spoke for many when he said, 'Seeing this film will be an intensely religious experience for many people. It was for me.' He added, 'Anyone seeing this film—believer and unbeliever alike—will be forced to confront the central mystery of Christ's passion, indeed of Christianity itself: If this is the remedy, what must the harm have been?'

"Regarding blame for the crucifixion of Christ, Di Noia says that 'each of the main characters contributes in some way to Jesus' fate: Judas betrays him; the Sanhedrin accuses him; the disciples abandon him; Peter denies knowing him; Herod toys with him; Pilate allows him to be condemned; the crowd mocks him; the Roman soldiers scourge, brutalize and finally crucify him; and the devil, somehow, is behind the whole action.' Only Mary, Di Noia observes, 'is really blameless.' When asked point blank whether the movie is anti-Semitic, Di Noia says, 'There is absolutely nothing anti-Semitic or anti-Jewish

about Mel Gibson's film.'

"This will go a long way to convince the public that what they are about to see is an act of love, not hatred. It may not appease Gibson's most extreme critics, most of whom have not seen the film, but it certainly makes their job of trying to discredit him that much harder. They are the ones who truly have been discredited."