

WILL JEWS BE ASSAULTED AFTER “THE PASSION”?

Catholic League president William Donohue offered the following reply to the question posed in this news release:

“After the Mel Gibson movie, ‘The Passion of the Christ,’ opens on February 25, some are saying that Jews may be attacked by Christians. No one has raised the specter of violence more than ADL director Abraham Foxman. On January 23, in the *Los Angeles Times*, he accused Gibson of ‘hawking it [the film] on a commercial crusade to the churches of this country. That’s what makes it dangerous.’ Not only has Foxman not responded to my request for an apology, he has upped the ante.

“A recent ADL fundraising letter read, ‘Of great concern to the Anti-Defamation League is the possibility that individuals are more likely to be targets of attack, simply because they are ‘different.’ On February 7, in the pages of the *Detroit Free Press*, he was more explicit. Commenting on Passion Plays throughout the centuries, Foxman opined, ‘We know those plays rationalized anti-Semitic behavior. We fear this will, too.’

“The nation’s leading scholar on Passion Plays is Columbia University professor James Shapiro, author of *Oberammergau: The Troubling Story of the World’s Most Famous Passion Play*. I asked him last week when was the last time Jews were beaten up after a Passion Play. Aside from one Catholic convert in Nazi Germany who was attacked, we have to go back to the Middle Ages to find examples. And in the U.S., there is no record of violence against Jews following any Passion Play. In short, there is no need to call out the National Guard.

“Foxman is worried about more than violence. On February 7, he was quoted in the *Orlando Sentinel* saying Gibson’s work ‘is

not being sold as a movie. It's being sold as a religious experience, as a pilgrimage, as a way back to faith.'

"So this is Foxman's worst nightmare: Gibson's film might actually inspire lapsed Christians to return to the faith. That says it all."