**The Passion of Christ (Movie) Mel Gibson**

No one can watch the film and come away without an awareness that there are two kinds of persons surrounding the crucifixion scene: 1). Those who believe that what is happening conforms to God's plan, even if they suffer great sorrow, though not sadness; and 2). Those without comprehension of the mystery. The latter class of persons includes, on the one hand, those with natural human sympathies, especially exhibited in the wife of Pilate, Claudia, and on the other, those who exhibit crass indifference, especially the lower ranks of Roman soldiers.

From start to finish, Mel Gibson does not shrink from including the devil in the dramatic action of "The Passion of the Christ." The devil, *"who would even try to divert Jesus from the mission received from his Father,"* appears in androgynous guise not, in my view, as a commentary on contemporary social mores, but to remind the viewers that the devil is "*a liar and the father of lies."*9

What people believe to be the good turns out to constitute a lie about the good of the human person. It's the oldest story in the book. In this case, the book is Genesis. ... The passion of Christ reverses the lot of man who had been expelled from the Garden. Christ decisively crushes the head of the serpent.

Should we not recognize in the fact that Gibson places on the lips of Mary Magdalene the question customarily reserved for the youngest son in a Jewish family, *"Why is this night ...,"* and that she asks the question of Mary, Christ's Mother, a sign that the New Eve now operates. Above all others, Mary, the New Eve, comprehends that great reversal of man's sorry plight has been inaugurated.

Mel Gibson directs Jim Caviezel in a way that, in my view, approaches accomplishing the impossible. There are the Christs of Pasolini, of Zeffirelli, and of Rossellini, but the Christ of Gibson captures what these others were content to accomplish by representing a high expression of human values.

Although I am not an art critic, it seems to me that the very excesses, even the distortions, which some commentators have questioned, in fact aim to show us that this man is more than human. That we have to look elsewhere for the source of his human endurance.

Is it too much a stretch to ask whether Mel Gibson also indicates Christ's divine nature by suggesting that He possesses infused knowledge? For instance, when Christ designs a 16th-century European table for first-century Palestinians. Or when, without effort, Christ begins to speak with Pilate in Latin?

"The Passion of the Christ" does not end with musings over the presumed interior dispositions of Jesus' followers. The film rather concludes with the unquestionable affirmation that this crucifixion results in events of cosmic significance that only God can produce.

Let me conclude with a word about the relationship of Christ's passion to the Church.

Mel Gibson succeeds in a way that at once stresses the feminine character of the Church — only women touch reverently the sacred blood, Veronica, Mary, Mary Magdalene, and by extension, even Claudia, who supplies fresh linen for the purpose.

And at the same time, he places the Virgin Mother of God, Mary Immaculate, in what is obviously the closest personal contact with the sufferings of her Son. She, who is Mother of the Redeemer, becomes by that fact mother of all who are redeemed.

We see Mary's maternal mediation enacted on film. Gibson portrays Mary placing "*herself between her Son and mankind* [remember the times that Mary looks directly at us!] *in the reality of their wants, needs and sufferings* [remember Peter at her feet]. She puts herself *'in the middle,'* that is to say, “*she acts as a mediatrix not as an outsider, but in her position as mother."*11 The words are from Pope John Paul II. Mel Gibson captures what the Pope writes *in "Mother of the Redeemer"* in a way that alone merits the film the title "Catholic."

If we recognize that the Passion is related to the Church, then we also recognize that it is related to the reality of the Eucharistic conversion. **There is a sense in which the whole film is about the Eucharist**. **The Bread of Life.**

St. Jerome illustrates this truth: "*Why should I not mourn, you say? Jacob put on sackcloth for Joseph* (see Genesis 37:35) ..., *but he only did so because Christ had not yet broken open the door of paradise, nor quenched with his blood the flaming sword and the whirling of the guardian cherubim* (see Genesis 3:24; cf. Ezekiel 1:15-20). ... For, as the apostle says, *'death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned'* (Romans 5:14). *But under Jesus, that is, under the Gospel of Christ, who unlocked for us the gate of paradise, death is accompanied, not with sorrow, but with joy."*12

"The Passion of the Christ" invites its viewers to recognize that in the ***eucharistized*** bread that the joyful Jim Caviezel offers to his priests/disciples, we discover the one source of the love that never ends. <https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=5926>