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The Passion: The Pope and Mel Gibson

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by John L. Alien Jr.

Pope John Paul II has given a thumbs-up to Mel Gibson's controversial new film *The Passion of [the] Christ*, a senior Vatican official told NCR (NationalCatholic Reporter}

Dec. 17 [2003]. "The Holy Father watched and enjoyed the film," the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity. "His [the Pope's] comment afterwards was, 'It is as it was.'" The official said the remark meant that the pope regards the film as a faithful depiction of the suffering and death of Christ as described in the New Testament.

Officially, Vatican spokespersons have so far refused to comment on whether or not the pope has seen the film. The senior official who spoke to NCR, however, confirmed that the pope watched a version provided by the film's producers.... In general the Vatican is hesitant to comment publicly on the pope's reactions [to films] for fear of being seen as issuing a commercial endorsement.