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The PASSION: A Friar's Comment

"The Church is not a museum of saints; it's a hospital for sinners."

by Fr. Ed Dillon, OFM

saw the Passion and want to see it again after reading a variety of reviews, some of which confirm my own reactions, though some say it is excessively violent. It's not violent, it's brutal. As the holy Father is quoted as saying, "It is as it was." Yes, brutal -- a portrayal of the brutality of sin -- ours.

Remember the movie of many years ago, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*? His painted portrait steadily became more and more distorted and grotesque with the decay of his personal life. Maybe there's a certain parallel with Mel Gibson's film. Man's self-degradation is made manifest in the body of Christ, instead of becoming so in the sinner's (mine).

Perhaps there's the rub. The Living Bible quotes St. Paul somewhere as saying, "My old nature loves to sin." Maybe that's what makes some critics squirm, as though they were finding themselves, as it were, in Macy's window.

On the other hand, it's also why some are weeping as they leave the theater. Their hearts have been touched.

As for the Church, sin and the scandal of it are nothing new. Every single generation from the beginning has had its share. Those who quit going and quit giving as an act of 'punishment' (mind you!) are doing precisely what our Lord charges the Pharisees with: seeing the speck but not the log. Not to mention finding an excuse for neglecting duties that perhaps were never really done happily or lovingly anyway.

The thing about Passion is that it forces the viewer to choose sides. No one is indifferent about it. It's the spiritual reality that cannot be escaped and that requires a response. Interesting. Revealing.

And here's the lesson: The Church is not a museum of saints; it's a hospital for sinners.

As Pogo, of that erstwhile comic strip, said:

"We have seen the enemy and he is us."