

Being Politically Correct on the Passion--My Reaction

Dear SOC Supporters,

I seem to be flooding your E-Mails with a lot of material recently, but please do not overlook this one if you can help it even though its only my own personal reaction to the twisted messages going back and forth these days between totally out of touch, self-proclaimed and self serving "leaders" of certain Jewish organizations, and often equally out of touch religious leaders in our Church who seem to have reached new heights in skills in avoiding any truth that might impact anyone for good these days.

My Comments addressed to Ralph who sent me the attached account below of the message by a Vatican "preacher":

Ralph, I have some thoughts on the piece you sent me and on this whole subject I would like to share. This whole controversy over anti-Semitism clearly has been contrived by those with unholy motivations and sadly the response by many in the Church to this twisted issue to me often has been woefully lacking if not even shameful.

It just amazes me how politically correct and safe everyone wants to be today--worst of all our spiritual leaders! In this case the error is not in what is said or that what is said is presented as important--it's what is not said and is in need of being said. So are we to believe the people of Israel, collectively as a nation in Jesus day did not definitively and particularly reject Christ? History and the Roman (not the Jerusalem) Catholic Church says something quite the opposite. So does Jesus in Matthew 23:37-39 And to deny or ignore that Israel nationally has suffered all down through the last two thousand years specifically because of its rejection of their Messiah is inexcusable.

Further, I do not think you will find anyone on the face of this earth (at least outside of a mental institution) that has ever accused all Jews individually of being guilty of crucifying Christ. And to spend time fighting this ridiculous phantom of anti-Semitism claimed to be rooted in or even remotely influenced by some tenant of Christian faith is only playing into the hands of those who have for 2000 years enjoyed seeing Christians (especially Catholics!) flagellate themselves for sins they have never committed. And when Jews have been hatefully and unfortunately called "Christ killers" by Christians, this has only been to justify a hatred already in place arising from other causes. The Scriptures tell us that the Jews would always be a thorn in the side of the nations until they come to embrace their Messiah. That many of the Jewish people rejected Christ 2000 years ago and thus personally became guilty of Deicide, has not been the thorn that has troubled the nations and thus been the cause of anti-Semitism throughout the centuries.

God, having chosen the Jewish people as the "elder brother" nation to lead all the other peoples and nations by its holy example, has uniquely gifted this people. These giftings have enabled the Jewish people to gain position, power and wealth wherever they have lived and under the most adverse conditions. It has been the terrible misuse of those gifts in the midst of the nations into which they have been driven (precisely because of their rejection of the Son of God!) that has been the occasion for anti-Semitism -- nothing else. Animosity toward a people or class of people, comes when a stereotype is adopted over some pronounced evil or moral failure of highly profiled members of a group. That is the sad story of the Jewish people who have always suffered because those who among them having risen to places of power and

influence have often seriously misused these gifts to the detriment of the people among whom they lived. Those are the facts of history that too many wish to obscure, just as many obscure the whole subject of sin and human culpability in our day. Note how this "preacher" avoids the real serious issue here of Jewish authorities' continuing to deny culpability on the part of those who actually crucified Jesus! (See text in red) But this continual denial they assume to themselves the very guilt of those who actually participated in Jesus' blatantly illegal trial and death! Those today who affirm such views continue to justify Jesus' death! And Christians who ignore this matter are no friends of the Jews. And what does this "preacher" do? He basically sticks his head in the sand! While he seems to indicate the claim of innocence is "historically contradictory," he avoids the point by urging us to go beyond the matter and identify the suffering of the Jewish people as their identification with the One they still have not accepted as Savior! Is this what Steven did when out of love for his people he told them the truth? (Acts 7) Was the horrible suffering of the Jews in Jerusalem in 70 AD, when Titus destroyed the city, their participation in the suffering of Christ when that judgment came because of the continued Jewish rejection of the Christian witness to Christ?

That Jesus prayed that the Father would forgive His crucifiers because they "did not know" what they were doing does not mean these were not culpable. It means they did not know the full significance or the full depth of their sin. And it certainly did not mean the Father forgave them! Those who did not repent of their horrendous crime went straight to an eternal Hell! Of course Hell is no longer acceptable religious vocabulary these days even among those who still say they believe in it. Though I would strongly affirm that the children and the humble, the truly loving and forgiving who suffer *of any religion* in a mystical way suffer with Christ and are accepted with God we need to be very clear that neither the religion of Judaism or Mohamed have moved much beyond the barest elements of monotheism. Neither religion knows God as Father requiring forgiveness to remain in fellowship with Him. And we must remember that was in Jesus' day and still is in our day why Christ is rejected as the Messiah of God by both these religions. That forgiveness is such a remote idea in their religions is also why these peoples *collectively* have put the whole world in danger of anarchy!

Finally, though we all had some part in Christ's death, we cannot forget there is a great extreme in difference in individual human culpability for the Crucifixion of Christ. We are not all equally guilty by any means, though it would be certainly foolish to think we could know exactly what we would have done had we been there in anyone else's shoes. Many the Light of divine Truth guide us in these troubled times!

Dave Webster

Papal Preacher Confronts the Question, "Who Killed Jesus?" In Lenten Homily, Father Cantalamessa Looks at the Letter of the Gospel

VATICAN CITY, MARCH 12, 2004 (Zenit.org).- The question, "Who killed Jesus?" posed by the media in reaction to Mel Gibson's "The Passion of The Christ," prompted an answer from the Papal Household preacher.

Capuchin Father Raniero Cantalamessa, who over the next three Fridays will propose reflections on

Easter to the Pope and his Roman Curia aides, dedicated his first Lenten homily to a reflection on the historical character of the Gospel accounts of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus.

"First of all," he said today, "we must affirm that, whatever explanations are given of the external circumstances and the juridical reasons of the death of Christ, they do not impair in the least the real meaning of his death which depends on what Jesus was thinking, and not on what others were thinking."

"When he instituted the Eucharist, he made clear in advance the meaning he gave to his death: 'Take this and eat it, this is my body given up for you,'" the preacher recalled in his homily, delivered in the Redemptoris Mater Chapel of the Apostolic Palace.

"No formula of faith of the New Testament or of the Church says that Jesus died 'for the sins of the Jews'; all say he 'died for our sins,' that is, the sins of all," he said.

"The doctrine of the Church knows only one sin that is transmitted by heredity from father to son, original sin," the Capuchin explained, reminding his listeners that it is not possible to accuse the Jewish people as a whole of the death of Jesus.

"If the Jews of future generations were held responsible for the death of Christ, for the same reason the Romans of future generations should be held responsible and accused of deicide, insofar as it is certain that, from the juridical point of view, the condemnation of Christ and his execution -- the form of crucifixion confirms it -- are to be imputed in the last analysis to the Roman authorities," he continued.

Father Cantalamessa summarized the position of the Catholic Church by quoting from the Second Vatican Council declaration "Nostra Aetate": "True, the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ; still, what happened in His passion cannot be charged against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today."

The preacher continued: "In this there is a certain convergence with the Hebrew tradition of the past itself. One thing emerges from the news of the death of Jesus, present in the Talmud and in other Jewish sources -- however belated and historically contradictory: **The Jewish tradition has never denied the participation of the authorities of the time in the condemnation of Christ. It has not based its defense on the denial of the fact but rather on denying that the condemnation from the Jewish point of view was unjust and that it constituted an offense.**"

"Perhaps, as believers, it is necessary to go beyond the affirmation of the non-culpability of the Jewish people and to see in the unjust suffering endured by them in history something that places them on the side of the suffering Servant of God and, therefore, for us Christians, on the side of Jesus," the preacher urged.

"Edith Stein had understood in this sense the tragedy that was under way for her and her people in Hitler's Germany," he said.

Quoting the Carmelite converted from Judaism who died in a concentration camp, he said: "'There, under the cross, is understood the destiny of the People of God. Reflect: those who know that this is the cross of Christ have the duty to take it upon themselves, on behalf of all others.'"