

## PASTOR'S COLUMN

### *Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ" Revisited*

During the Season of Lent, we are called, as Disciples of the Lord Jesus, to unite our crosses to His. We reflect, in a special way, upon His Passion.

We believe that in the union of His Paschal Mystery to ours, we find not suffering and death, but rather new life, new hope, and new beginnings.

On March 15th at 7PM, we will take time to revisit the movie, *The Passion of the Christ* by Mel Gibson.

Rabbi Mel Libman and I will each share some perspectives on the movie. Our time together will hopefully help create a closer bond between our "elder brothers" and ourselves, and for us, as Disciples of the Lord Jesus, help us live Christ's Paschal Mystery more fully in our own lives.

If you plan to attend this session, you are encouraged to view the movie, *The Passion of the Christ* in preparation. Copies are available in our Parish Library.

I have also included my comments on the movie which were written a year ago, as a Pastor's column for March 28th, 2004:

Sitting in well built, beautifully designed sanctuaries, clothed in the latest designer fashions with just the right labels, adorned with crosses made of gold, diamonds, and other precious jewels, listening to well-constructed homilies (of just the right length demanded by parishioners), are all factors that help to create a great "disconnect" with the Cross of Christ which is the major symbol of God's love for us and the foundation of our faith as Christians.

How glibly the phrase is thrown around – "Jesus suffered and died to save the world." Do we have any clue or inkling regarding what the phrase really means, not theologically, not spiritually, not psychologically, but physically and really – "...for our sake was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered, died and was buried." (The Nicene Creed)

Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* helps to lessen the gap and to provide a "connect" with our thoughts and ideas and the reality of the situation some 2,000 years ago.

Much has been said and much will continue to be said about the movie of the season – *The Passion of the Christ*.

I had the opportunity to see the movie last week. It provided for me a very prayerful Lenten reflection that was both immediate and prolonged.

It is a remarkable movie, one that I would encourage people to see, and encourage parents to view with their children with the commitment to family discussion about the movie afterwards.

Mel Gibson has the gift and ability to "breathe real life" into biblical characters as no other director of "Bible Story" movies has been able to do in the past.

The movie's "in your face" brutal reality simply tells us what it was like, without sugarcoating and apologies. In a very real sense, the movie says to its viewers – "Now deal with it if you wish! What does this mean to you? How will you attempt to connect your reality to this piece of the reality of Jesus of Nazareth?"

The movie is so popular because it touched a nerve and a need that we Christians did not know we were experiencing. If we are not careful and deliberate, Christianity can simply become an ethical and philosophical way in which to live, following the Teachings of the Christ to love one another. Christianity, though, is much more than that.

It is a belief that this Jesus of Nazareth who was indeed a human being, living in "real time," was also the Son of God, and that He was crucified on a cross out of love for all humanity.

Gibson's efforts challenge us to remember that we believe that our faith is rooted in history. Christianity is ethical teaching, rooted in history and rooted in Jesus of Nazareth who lived 2,000 years ago and who was crucified as a common criminal. The movie helps to "re-historicize" Christianity for us today.

Personally, I will never look at the crucifix in the same way again!