

Church Godless

February 14, 2009

An interesting portrait of the pre-Conciliar Catholic Church is drawn in a recent film, called "Doubt." The film contains no nudity, bad language or violence, except verbal in a few heated conversations, and it earned for the famous lead actress, Meryl Streep, a prestigious award for her playing of the part of Mother Superior of a Brooklyn convent in the New York of 1964.

The film centres around the clash between herself and the local parish priest. Both are directly concerned in the running of the parish school, where Mother Superior discovers that Father may be molesting one of the boys. She sets out to track him down, and arrives at the conviction that he is guilty. However, the result of her inquest is merely that the priest is promoted by his bishop to a rather better parish in the diocese. The film ends with the woman of iron breaking down in tears.

At first sight the clash is between a nun of the old Church and a priest of the Conciliar Church. She is shown as a strict disciplinarian with an old-fashioned knowledge of human nature and of children, using a time-honored bag of methods and tricks to keep them under control, and to keep the priest in line.

He, on the contrary, is shown doubting the old certainties – hence the film's title – and treating the children and Sisters with a much more modern emphasis on love, spelt luv!

Now for sure and certain the priest in trouble, and the hierarchy that covers up for him to get out of trouble, belong to the Conciliar Church, and foreshadow a scene all too familiar. But when we see Mother Superior in tears because he has been promoted, we have to ask ourselves, why is she

crumbling? – she is not shown then pulling herself together. Does she believe in God or in her bishop?

If she believed in God, how could she let herself be so shaken? If she is so shaken, she must have believed all too humanly in the human hierarchy, which sure enough has let her down. Thus while the merely human drama is between two people, the real drama for Catholics with eyes to see is a whole Church collapsing for lack of God.

Mother Superior clings humanly to a decent discipline, but nothing in Meryl Streep's performance suggests that that discipline is anchored in God. Still less anchored in God is the priest making merely human love float on top of doubt.

The Church of 1964, as here portrayed to the life, was doomed.

Kyrie eleison.