

Remarkable Film

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It is easy to see how the recently released French film, "Of Gods and Men," gained top prize at the prestigious Cannes Film Festival in France last year. It recreates real events of 1996, the last months in the life of a Cistercian monastery in post-colonial Algeria, where the eight monks were finally taken out and killed by unknown assassins. The film is beautifully directed, acted and photographed. Of particular interest to Catholics familiar with Tradition will be the film's religion and – from a religious point of view – the politics.

Perhaps most remarkable of all is the film's true sense of religion, given that it is the Conciliar religion being portrayed. Doctrinally, there are for instance ecumenical moments of excessive respect for the Koran. Liturgically, the words and music chanted in the simple but noble monastery church are of modern man, subjective and sentimental. Yet the scenes regularly showing the monks at prayer are so genuinely religious as to be altogether surprising in our secular age. This, one says to oneself, is what monasteries are about!

What can one say? As for the film's directing and acting, just as modern Britons can still most convincingly represent the Victorian age because the British Empire is close enough in their history to be still in their bloodstream, so the French actors of this film must make marvellous monks on screen because Catholic monasticism has been such an important part of their heritage. But above all, as Our Lord says (Mt.XV,18,19), it is what is in the heart of a man that matters. Much the best of all is heartfelt Tradition, but this film is there to remind us Traditionalists that heartfelt Conciliarism may yet please God better than Tradition losing heart.

The politics portrayed in the film are of particular interest in view of the current Islamic uprising in various Arab countries. The monks in the film, as no doubt happened in real life, are caught politically between the Devil and the deep blue sea. On the one side their non-Islamic lives are obviously threatened by the Islamic rebels killing anybody in the way of a political take-over of Algeria for Islam. On the other side the post-colonial Algerian government is highly suspicious of the monks aiding and abetting the rebels by, for instance, practising on their wounded the Church's corporal works of mercy, and it invites the monks to leave the country. To this day some people think that they were executed by the Algerian government. God knows.

What can one say? Certainly heartfelt Catholicism is far superior to heartfelt Islam, which is an anti-Christian, simplistic and brutal sect. But if the heart is drained out of Catholicism, as it was by Vatican II, so that in real life, anywhere in the world, Catholic monks and priests are liable to be giving not only medical but also moral support to anti-Catholic revolutionaries – in fact, as Archbishop Lefebvre used to say, modernist priests make the most terrible of revolutionaries! – can one be surprised if any established government objects to Conciliar priests' undermining of law and order? Islam is only rising because the true Catholic Church is still falling.

How much depends upon the few souls holding to Catholic Tradition!

Kyrie eleison.