"Who do you see that I am?": Global Perspectives on Jesus Films
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I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me--and I in him--bears much fruit, because apart from me you can accomplish nothing (John 15:1, 5). • I am a friend of Jesus. I no longer call you slaves, because the slave does not understand what his master is doing. But I have called you friends, because I have revealed to you everything I heard from my Father (John 15:15). • I have been justified and redeemed. He is the reason you have a relationship with Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption … (1 Corinthians 1:30). • My body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who dwells in me. Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you (1 Corinthians 6:19)?

Jesus persisted: "But who do you say that I am?" Only Simon Peter ventured a reply: "Thou art the Christ." In the end Jesus declined to enlighten his followers. He simply bade them to hold their tongues. They did not, of course, and the questions that Jesus posed, or is said to have posed, have therefore been posed for all time. The Jesus whom Schweitzer himself found was not a peasant Disraeli but a strange and, from a modern perspective, unfathomable eschatological prophet; an alien from a first-century world that modern folk had trouble acknowledging as utterly different; a sometimes frightening teacher who spoke and behaved as if the end of the world were literally about to occur Christians of the Belle Epoque. "Jesus of Nazareth." The answer comes quickly. "I am he." Thus begins the final chapter of the most influential story in Western history.

Gibson is an ultraconservative Roman Catholic, a traditionalist who does not acknowledge many of the reforms of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). He favors the Latin mass, does not eat meat on Fridays and adheres to an unusually strict interpretation of Scripture and doctrine—a hard-line creed he grew up with and rediscovered about a dozen years ago. Shot in Italy, financed by Gibson, the $25 million film is tightly focused on Jesus' final 12 hours. After Jesus, carrying his cross, sees the faces of the priests, he is shown
saying: "No one takes my life from me, but I lay it down of my own accord." Is this intended to absolve the priests?