

# A CALL TO ACTION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

By Karen Lynn Krugh

*In late September, for over two days, the city of New York was rocked by the protests of the Catholic League. Hardly a television or radio station missed the story. It was hot stuff. Religion and sex always sells, doesn't it?*

As you now know, the Catholic League was successful in having the Metropolitan Transportation Authority and New York Telephone remove offensive ads for VH-1 from city buses and telephone booths. The ad featured a picture of the pop singer Madonna opposite an image of the Virgin Mary holding the Infant Jesus.

How does that comparison sit with you? How about the words emblazoned down the center of the ad – “VH-1, The Difference Between You and Your Parents”?

Is that true? It's not for me, and it's not true for most of my friends, either.

The VH-1 ad is inexcusable for many reasons. Here are but a few: 1) It promotes division between generations. In a society straining under the burden of broken homes, adultery, divorce, abuses and other assorted ills which many attribute to the breakdown of traditional nuclear families, why would VH-1 want to negatively promote differences between generations?

2) It holds up Madonna Ciccone as a model for our generation. Sure, compared to Madonna, we'd all look like angels, but wouldn't you rather be associated with the Queen of Heaven than the queen of obscenity?

3) It says that it's okay, even cool, to blaspheme a religious symbol. According to some, the display of any religious symbol

on public property is inherently offensive. But why should we protect the sensitivities of those who don't believe and not those who do?

I hope those of you who are in the New York area and who saw the ad were outraged and moved to action. For the rest of you, all I can say is that Catholic bashing will surely rear its ugly head somewhere near you in the not too distant future.

Many young people are quite willing to take up a cause and let their voices be heard. But are we this militant when it comes to defending our faith? We fight when it affects our pocketbooks or the environment. Why not our church? Are we embarrassed, or perhaps afraid to take up what we think may be a lonely battle? I know through my work with youth and young adult groups in my parish that we can make a difference and we will take action if we have direction and strong leadership. Let the numbers, the support and the swell of enthusiasm still reverberating through America from the Holy Father's visit at World Youth Day energize you. Let those who attend your CCD, CYO, Youth Group, Young Adult group or your church energize you. Let the forceful action of adults energize you.

I've been with the Catholic League just two months now and I can't believe how much work we have to do. And that's a sad reflection on American society today. If the defaming of the Catholic Church and the attempts to restrict or suspend the religious and civil rights of Catholics were not so common and acceptable, I would have a lighter workload. Unfortunately, I don't and so I appeal to youth.

The Catholic League is looking to increase youth and young adult involvement both in the League and in anti-defamation causes around the country. Write to me and I'll send you information on the latest action the League has taken to fight discrimination against Catholics. I'll also send along membership information. In the meantime, keep your eyes and ears open to things in your area that you find offensive as

Catholics. Become pro-active in your faith. Write letters to the editor. Don't be afraid to stand up for the church, just make sure you know the argument before you commit yourself. Pope John Paul II told us in Denver that we should not be ashamed of the Gospel, or of our faith. Will you listen to him?

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