

ABC ADMITS ERROR IN SHOWING OF THE PRACTICE

On the March 18 episode of the ABC show, "The Practice," a priest was shown violating the seal of confession. Under oath, a man playing a priest testified at a criminal trial about what he had learned in the confessional. The case involved the killing of a Jewish woman by a Catholic man.

The league's first response to the media was as follows: "The priest in the show is so unorthodox as to be unrecognizable to most Catholics. In addition, the Sacrament of Reconciliation is presented in such a way as to invite the viewer to regard it with bewilderment. And by casting the victimizer as Catholic and the victim as a Jew, the effect of the program is not to endear anyone to Catholicism. In short, this is one more statement about Catholicism emanating from Hollywood that is becoming all too familiar."

In a letter from ABC's Department of Broadcast Standards & Practices, an apology was announced for the "error." ABC denied that anti-Catholicism was at work, stating that "It was simply a misunderstanding, based on our belief that, like attorney/client privilege, the confidentiality of the confessional could be waived by the individual. We have discussed this issue with the producers and will certainly not commit this error again."

While this letter is satisfactory, it needs to be said that the April 1 episode of "The Practice" unfairly maligned orthodox Jewish rabbis. So while the folks at ABC may be learning something about the teachings of the Catholic Church, what they really need to learn is to stop castigating religious figures.