

ABC'S BEEF WITH ROSEANNE BARR IS PHONY

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the firing of Roseanne Barr from ABC-TV:

Roseanne Barr has been making vile comments for years, so why—all of a sudden—has she crossed the line? In 1990, when she grabbed her crotch, spit on the ground, and gave a screeching rendition of our national anthem at a baseball game, the cultural elites who now hate her were fine with her stunt. It's not America bashing they despise—it's racism.

It sure isn't anti-Catholicism that bothers them, either. Now that the media are rediscovering some of Barr's past bigoted statements, they seem to be unaware of, or just don't care about, her anti-Catholic bigotry.

In 2012, Barr said that Catholic employers should include psychiatric coverage for the children of women workers because the kids "might get molested by Catholic priests." Two years earlier she said, "I am starting to think that any parent who takes their kids to Catholic churches from now on should lose custody. Taking your kids where you know sex offenders hang out is inexcusable." No one blinked an eye in New York or Hollywood.

But when Barr made a racist remark this week about a black woman, the alarms went off. ABC entertainment president Channing Dungey called Barr's comment "abhorrent, repugnant and inconsistent with our values." That is demonstrably untrue. Neither ABC nor its parent company, Disney, has found bigoted comments to be inconsistent with their values. To prove it, consider the following summary of ABC's tolerance for anti-Catholic bigotry.

Valerie Jarrett may be a prominent woman, but she is not

exactly in the same class with Mother Teresa. When the saintly nun died in 1997, ABC anchor Peter Jennings allowed anti-Catholic bigot Christopher Hitchens to rant and rave against Mother Teresa at her funeral Mass. That it took place during the consecration of the Host made it all the more offensive.

In 1996 and 1997, ABC launched "Nothing Sacred," a drama series about a radical Catholic priest who excoriated the Church for its teachings on sexuality. He engaged in violence in and out of the church, and was surrounded by Buddha-worshipping nuns and dysfunctional priests. ABC kept the show alive to spite our protest, moving it around to different days and times, but finally succumbed to our pressure. It would never do a show about a discordant rabbi or imam.

On April 7, 1998, ABC debuted "That's Life," a show that mocked Christ's crucifixion, the Host, transubstantiation, Holy Water, Catholic prayers, Midnight Mass, salvation, Catholic rituals, the Vatican, the New Testament, the Stations of the Cross, Confession, nuns, priests, and practicing lay Catholic men and women. This was intentionally aired during Holy Week.

In 2002, ABC presented "Miracles," a show about a man who studies for the priesthood and leaves before taking his vows. He engages in a personal search for God but concludes that the Church is "extraneous and even a hurdle in the spiritual quest." He parts company with the Church hierarchy because "he feels its leaders do not really believe in miracles."

In 2005, ABC treated viewers to a segment, "On the Trail of Pope Joan," about a pope that never existed. Earlier in the year, "20/20" correspondent Elizabeth Vargas told viewers that the resurrection of Jesus was either "physical, metaphysical, or simply a hallucination—the dreams of grieving followers."

No show on ABC has been more relentlessly bigoted than "The View," co-hosted and co-produced by Barbara Walters for many

years. She allowed Joy Behar, Elizabeth Hasselbeck, and Whoopi Goldberg to make the most vicious and sweeping comments about priests, the pope, the sacraments, and Catholic rituals. Never once did she find fault with their bigotry. If anything, she led them on, provoking even more vitriol.

More recently, ABC gave viewers "The Real O'Neals," a cruel caricature of an Irish Catholic family based on the life of one of its producers, Dan Savage. He is an obscene anti-Catholic bigot. We fought it and eventually it crashed.

Family shows are big at ABC. Gays love "Modern Family," Jews love "The Goldbergs," Asians love "Fresh Off the Boat," and African Americans love "Black-ish." And what do Catholics get? "The Real O'Neals."

Looks like they can't get enough of Irish Catholic families at ABC. This fall viewers will be treated to "The Kids Are Alright," a show about a "traditional Irish-Catholic family" of working-class stock. They live like animals: ten people sharing three bedrooms and one bathroom. The oldest son enters a seminary but quits so he can "save the world." ABC boasts that "the times are changing and this family will never be the same." They will make sure of that.

This show, following "The Real O'Neals," is based on the life of its producer, in this case Tim Doyle. Guess which show he just finished doing? "Roseanne."

In the May 30 edition of the *New York Times*, it says that Disney "has been widely praised in recent years as a leader in efforts to combat racial stereotypes through its movies and [ABC] TV series"; it offered several examples. That's true. Disney even pulled a Halloween costume in 2016 that depicted a Polynesian figure featured in the movie, "Moana." They didn't want to offend Pacific Islanders.

Why doesn't Disney/ABC find religious stereotypes as offensive as racial ones? Actually, it does, as long as its Jews or

Muslims who are being considered for stereotyping. But not Catholics—they're fair game.

When a pilot was ordered in January for "The Kids Are Alright," ABC entertainment chief Channing Dungey said the network was "going to continue to sort of push the boundaries of what a family comedy actually means."

She surely did not mean that ABC would push the boundaries of acceptability for gays, Jews, Asians, or blacks. That would be bigoted. They save that kind of fun for Catholics.

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