

A&E TARGETS CATHOLIC CHURCH

On October 21, the Arts & Entertainment Network (A&E) broadcast a program on the Catholic Church, "Sex and the Church: A House Divided," that broke new ground in reporting on division within the Church: it actually promoted it. Unlike other documentaries on dissent, this program, which was produced and narrated by Bill Kurtis, sought to paint the Catholic Church in the worst possible light.

In "Sex and the Church," we learn about the "hopelessly defining Pope" a laity that is "forming their own religion," women and young people who are "leaving the Roman Catholic Church," priests who are "a grey lot, overworked and weary of the struggle," along with "the truly desperate." That the Catholic Church continues to increase its ranks while mainline Protestant churches (which have made the changes that Kurtis desires) are declining is not something the A&E program sought to explain.

We also learn about the Church's "restrictive views on sex" which have "effectively gutted the priest-hood" because of its "medieval" perspective. Indeed it is the Church's "sexual repression" and its "ruling class of celibate males that "tell[s] women what to do," resulting in the 'slowly flickering flame" of the Church. In short, as A&E sees it, either the Church can stop being Catholic or it will quickly collapse.

Dr. William A. Donohue, president of the Catholic League, issued the following statement on the program:

"It seems plain that the producer and narrator of the A&E broadcast 'Sex and the Church,' has an animus against the Catholic Church. Kurtis first exposed his real interest in Catholicism in his 1993 foray against the Church. "Sins of the Father." Now he has returned to distort out of all proportion

the extent of the divisiveness in the Church, using hyperbole for fact. It is clear that Kurtis prefers a trendy Church to one that evinces Truth. That is his choice. But he should not expect Catholics to entertain his fantasies in public without being tarred with the brush of bigotry.”

The Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights is the nation’s largest Catholic civil rights organization. It defends the right of Catholics—lay and clergy alike—to participate in American life without defamation or discrimination.