

ANTI-POPE AD WITHDRAWN AFTER LEAGUE PROTEST

In early December, AmFAR, the American Foundation for AIDS Research, released several new ads, one of which read, "IF THE POPE HAD AIDS, HE'D NEED MORE THAN JUST YOUR PRAYERS." The ad was scheduled for display on the sides of city buses and other public places in the New York metropolitan area before possibly going nationwide.

The ad drew immediate fire from the Catholic League. The following statement was released to the media on December 5:

"Instead of blaming the Pope, AmFAR should instead congratulate the Holy Father for promoting restraint. Indeed, if everyone followed the Pope's teachings, AmFAR wouldn't exist. It is an elementary truism that if lethal sex acts and drug use were curtailed, so, too, would AIDS. Yet that message is not something that AmFAR has been known to disseminate.

"No private sector institution has done more to service AIDS patients than the Catholic Church: it does more to alleviate the suffering of those with AIDS than all the activist organizations combined.

"Some people's idea of helping AIDS patients is distributing red ribbons, others choose to blame innocents for the disease, and not a few choose to campaign for more research. The Catholic Church prefers to offer sound advice about the consequences of promiscuity while simultaneously caring for those with full-blown AIDS. That is why it is unique and that is why the Pope is deserving of AmFAR's emulation, not disdain."

Shortly after the Catholic League mounted its protest, which was joined by the Archdiocese of New York, the offensive ad was withdrawn. AmFAR, an AIDS activist organization associated

with Elizabeth Taylor, publicly stated that it was pulling its anti-Pope ad because it did not want to interfere with its larger message.