

BENETTON DELIGHTS IN SACRILEGIOUS AD

The New York based Benetton Sportssystem, a division of Benetton Group S.p.A., is about to launch an advertising campaign that will outrage Christians. The ad shows a picture of Jesus crucified on a cross with Roman soldiers hammering nails to the bottom of the cross. The label "BENETTON SPORTSYSTEM" is placed near the cross with the inscription "DO YOU PLAY ALONE" next to it. To the side is a picture of the Benetton Asolo climbing boot and in small print is the statement "WHEN THERE IS NOTHING BUT YOU AND THE MOUNTAIN DON'T FEEL ABANDONED. YOU HAVE SOMETHING STRONG TO BELIEVE IN. ASOLO ASF COUNT ON IT FOR EXTREME PERFORMANCE."

The Benetton ad is already appearing in some tennis magazines, but is scheduled for widespread publication this fall in the United States, Europe and Asia.

Catholic League president William A. Donohue released the following statement on the ad:

"Benetton has a history of confusing indecency for creativity. But now it has crossed the line in a most serious way. The symbol of Christ on the cross expresses the most central message of Christianity. Benetton's advertising director, Oliviero Toscani, has publicly boasted of his delight in jarring public sensibilities. So obnoxious is his work that Benetton ads have been banned in Germany and declared offensive by a French court.

"The Catholic League does not want to see Benetton's ads banned in the U.S., rather it wants to see them stigmatized. Those whose moral compass is their pocketbook are not affected by moral suasion, and that is why appeals to decency never work with such people. What they respond to is organized

pressure. Accordingly, the Catholic League would rather see Benetton go belly up than be banned by the courts. It will use its influence to affect that end."

The Catholic League 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.