

# BILL DONOHUE'S LETTER TO SUMNER REDSTONE

Mr. Sumner Redstone

CEO, Viacom

1515 Broadway

New York, New York 10036-5794

Dear Mr. Redstone:

"Mother F-king Teresa." [In the letter, the full word was spelled.] That's what Showtime's Penn and Teller called Mother Teresa on shows that aired May 23, 24 and 27. From beginning to end, the episode, "Holier Than Thou," derided Mother Teresa, her Missionaries of Charity nuns and the Catholic Church. This was not humor—not even irreverent humor. It was hate speech.

Nothing I have seen in 12 years as president of the Catholic League has been this bad. And it occurred on your watch. Therefore, while you no doubt did not conceive this episode, it is your responsibility to hold those who did accountable. You can begin with the producer\* who lied to me last October: she asked me to appear on the show, which I agreed to do, saying it would not be an attack on Mother Teresa; Showtime was simply interested, she said, in showing "both sides." You may also want to consult with Matthew Blank, who, after all, should know something about this hit job on Catholicism.

The film crew came to my office on October 27, 2004. They were quite professional. One of the men read questions that were prepared for him, and none was offensive. When it was over, any concerns I had were relieved. But not for long: a few weeks later, the producer called to say that there were

technical difficulties with the tape that they shot and therefore they wanted to do it again. About the same time, I was contacted by someone (whose name will remain anonymous) who told me that he knew from the inside that Showtime was going to hammer Mother Teresa. So I declined the request to do it over again.

The producer lied—again. As we now know, there was nothing wrong with the tape. But there is something wrong with her, and with Viacom.

If you choose to do nothing about this, that is your choice. But believe me, Mr. Redstone, if that is your decision, you are making a big mistake. I will not let go of this issue. Already, I have sent an excerpt of this show to hundreds of influential persons across the nation, including the bishops of every diocese. This is just the beginning. But it could also be the end: If you decide to forthrightly address this issue, I will be fair, and would certainly agree to discuss this with anyone on your staff.

**\*Update:** On July 18, the producer called Bill Donohue to apologize for the show. She was the person who wrote the questions that were asked of Donohue by the technical crew that did the actual interview (none of which, Donohue said, were inappropriate). She had nothing to do with the editing of the Penn and Teller show. The producer said that a decision has been made to never again show the particular episode we protested.

Donohue welcomed her call, found her to be sincere, and accepted her apology; he also was persuaded that she had legitimate reasons for wanting to tape the show a second time. He is still waiting to hear from someone at Viacom, CBS or Showtime, and thus does not consider this matter closed.