

# BOOK OF THE MONTH CLUB MAKES CURIOUS CHOICES

The June "Mixed Media" catalog of the Book of the Month Club had a full page of video selections entitled, "Crisis of Faith." Most of the offerings were vintage anti-Catholic fare, raising questions about the selection process of the Book of the Month. Included were *Priest*, *The Last Temptation of Christ*, *Agnes of God*, *The Boys of St. Vincent* and *Priests of Passion: Celibacy and the Catholic Church*.

Dr. Donohue wrote to George Artandi, president of the club, stating his objections. An excerpt appears below.

Why are anti-Catholic titles branded "Crisis of Faith" when it would be more honest to simply dub them "Catholic Bashing"? Moreover, why does the Book of the Month Club cluster these films? It would also be useful to know who the intended audience is.

I raise these questions because I doubt for one moment that you would offer *Birth of a Nation* or the *Best of Amos and Andy*, never mind lump them with other anti-black videos. And would you then title these selections, "Crisis of Race"?

I think you would agree that Catholic sensibilities deserve the same respect accorded to African Americans. Please let me know your thoughts on this matter.

Responding to Dr. Donohue's letter, Richard F. Schnabel, the executive vice president of the Book of the Month Club, said "We regret the disturbance caused by our selection of video titles categorized as 'Crisis of Faith,'" but then proceeded to argue that "These selections are profound and, in many cases, critically acclaimed expressions of modern as well as traditional filmmaking."

Schnabel sent along copies from their catalog of religious offerings which were not offensive, trying to make the point that the Book of the Month Club does market positive portrayals of religion. The league acknowledges this to be true but is certain that the company would not offend blacks by hawking a "Crisis of Race" selection of racist videos. Why Catholics aren't accorded equal treatment is something the league will be monitoring in future catalogs.