

# Broadway's Sacrilege Makes Political Statement

The Broadway play, *Sacrilege*, is not anti-Catholic the way the movie *Priest* was, but it is certainly not designed to flatter the Catholic Church either.

The play involves a progressive nun who wants to be a priest. Sister Grace (played by Ellen Burstyn) is portrayed as a nun who serves the poor while openly defying the teachings of the Catholic Church. At one point, she pretends to hear confession and bestow the last rites on a dying man. Responsible for turning a street bum into a priest, Sister Grace is quickly identified by the audience as a person who serves the Lord while disobeying her superiors. The play ends with Cardinal King (who just removed Sister Grace from the Sisters of Charity) stating that he is leaving for Appalachia to work with the poor so that he can see what it is like to be a priest again. He then asks the ex-nun to hear his confession.

Catholic League president William A. Donohue saw the play on October 29 and issued the following remark to the press:

"*Sacrilege* will be welcomed by every disaffected Catholic, feminist and secularist as a worthy political statement against the Catholic Church. Though the play does not engage in Catholic bashing, it does invite the audience to see the Catholic Church as an oppressive institution. True to form, traditionalists who uphold the Church's teachings are seen as authoritarian and unenlightened while progressives who challenge the Church are cast as humane and intelligent. The silly ending to the play, coupled with its political tendentiousness, makes *Sacrilege* the kind of artistic commentary that is vintage 1990s.

"Those who perceive the play as making an accurate statement

on the Catholic Church would do well to explain why any institution-secular or religious-should permit public displays of insubordination. It would also help to know why the teaching prerogatives of the Catholic religion seem to warrant such public fascination, even to the point of being voyeuristic."

The play, in short, is one big lament and will find favor with those who are more interested in egalitarian politics than in service to the Church.