

CBS' THE WRIGHT VERDICTS FODDER FOR SEN. DOLE AND OTHERS

The June 4 episode of the CBS show The Wright Verdicts was the most bigoted portrayal of Catholics and the Catholic Church to have appeared on any television program thus far in 1995. Every possible negative stereotype was used to convey the message that the Catholic Church is a despicable organization. Here is a partial list of the characterizations that were presented: a child abuse scandal and cover-up; sexism in the church; bishops as bullies; hypocritical and materialistic priests; alcoholic priests; the trivialization of papal infallibility; a nun accused of murdering a bishop; brutal nuns; guilt-ridden Catholic schools; a nun who had an abortion before entering the convent; "silly" birth control position; a bishop as "a shark in a Roman collar"; corruption in the church; dishonest donors; ridicule of the confessional seal; persecution of a homosexual priest.

Catholic League president William A. Donohue made the following statement on the show:

"Notwithstanding the fact that Klansmen would surely endorse the June 4 episode of The Wright Verdicts, the hooded terrorists could not have made the show: they lack the sophistication of Dick Wolf, the show's creator and executive producer. Unlike Klansmen, Wolf wants to do more than just bash Catholics, he wants to project a vision of Catholicism that promotes his politics. That is why the feminist nun who previously had an abortion and is now unfairly accused of murdering the New York Archbishop is seen as compassionate. The homosexual priest is, of course, another victim, and he is also compassionate. But those who enforce the vicious rules of the church, namely the Archbishop and the Monsignor, are

seen as evil (the latter is a pedophile who kills the Archbishop).

“Wolf, the creator and executive producer of the show, has a track record of bashing Catholics. In January 1991, Wolf’s show, Law and Order featured pro-life Catholics who were either violent fanatics, sexually repressed or hypocrites. In November 1993, a Law and Order episode showed a detective complaining that his Catholic-practicing mother was a child abuser.

“It does not matter that the show will not return next season. Our problem is with CBS, Dick Wolf Films, Universal Television, MCA and Seagram, all of whom bear responsibility for the show. Now that Senator Bob Dole has made Hollywood a target of criticism, we will appeal to him, and to every other presidential candidate—including President Clinton—to address the anti-Catholicism that is evident in the industry. This show will be exhibit A.”