

"CORPUS CHRISTI" TO RUN IN FALL; PROTEST MOUNTS

Terrence McNally's "Corpus Christi," a play about a Christ-like character who has sex with the apostles, is scheduled to open in New York this fall. It had previously been withdrawn but then it was rescheduled; the producer, the Manhattan Theatre Club, succumbed to pressure from the artistic community and put the play back on the drawing board.

Following the announcement to cancel the play, thirty major playwrights signed a letter demanding that the Manhattan Theatre Club stick to its guns. It was signed by Tony Kushner, Arthur Miller, Christopher Durang, A.R. Gurney, Stephen Sondheim, Wendy Wasserstein and others.

From the beginning, the Catholic League has led the fight against this "gay Jesus" play. Over the summer, the league is building a coalition of Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and Muslim groups who object to this blasphemy. The early support from the Orthodox Jewish community has been outstanding.

The media response to the league's objections has been incredible. Most of the reporting has been fair, but some of the commentaries have been unfair, not to say hypocritical. Leading the way in this regard was a May 28 editorial in the *New York Times*, entitled "Censoring Terrence McNally." The Catholic League answered the *Times* with an op-ed page ad of its own (see p.2).

Neither the playwright nor the producer will release a copy of the script to the Catholic League. But a story in the *New York Times* says that the script "from the beginning to the end retells the Biblical story of a Jesus-like figure—from his birth in a Texas flea-bag hotel with people having profane, violent sex in the room next door to his crucifixion as 'king

of the queers.’” It adds that the Christ-like character, Joshua, “has a long-running affair with Judas and sexual relations with the other apostles”; the Jesus-figure also has sex on stage, albeit in a nonexplicit way, with an HIV-positive street hustler.

The play ends by saying, “If we have offended, so be it. He belongs to us as well as you.” The league urges its members to write to their congressman and senators demanding an end to support for the National Endowment for the Arts (the Manhattan Theatre Club receives NEA grants). The league will unveil other strategies in due course.