

“DATELINE” DUMPS ON CATHOLICS AT CHRISTMAS

On December 21, the NBC show “Dateline” did a segment on a mental institution in Quebec (St. Julien’s) that was operated by the Catholic Church in the first half of this century. Some of those who were assigned there were reportedly abused by the nuns who ran the facility.

Catholic League president William Donohue did not question the veracity of the story, but he was troubled by two things: out of the entire universe of stories that “Dateline” could address, why was this one chosen and why was it shown the week of Christmas? He expressed his concerns to NBC and received a prompt response from NBC executive producer for broadcast standards, David McCormick. McCormick said that “this was not a report on the Catholic Church in general but a specific orphanage in Canada.” He added that “There was no intent to criticize the role of the Church at this time of the year.”

Donohue then called McCormick to complain that his central questions were never addressed. Unfortunately, the phone conversation did not resolve the issue.

Donohue had this to say about the matter today:

“In my letter to NBC, I stressed that ‘My point is to question the decision-making process that resulted in this story and its timing. Of all the stories that may interest viewers—babies born alive in abortion clinics, the source of Rev. Al Sharpton’s income, the legalization of torture in Israel, gay sexual practices and the AIDS epidemic—‘Dateline’ chose to reach back to the first half of this century to do a piece about a Catholic-run institution in another country that just happened to air during Christmas week.’”

Given McCormick’s unsatisfactory response, the league will

notify its members in the next issue of its monthly journal, Catalyst, to contact McCormick and express their concerns.