

GRAMMY NOMINEE JOAN OSBORNE “RELISHES” CONTROVERSY

In her album “Relish,” Grammy Nominee Joan Osborne has released two songs, both of which use Catholic themes in a manner that is disturbing. Though Osborne did not win a Grammy, she was nominated in five categories for her work.

Newsweek described Osborne’s work as “an enticing marriage of the sexual and the spiritual,” while Entertainment Weekly praises her song One of Us for being “spiritual and sacrilegious—a songwriting feat.” One of Us, which was also nominated as “Song of the Year,” contains the following lyrics:

“What if God was one of us, just like a slob like one of us. Just like a stranger, on a bus, trying to make his way home. If God had a face what would he look like? And would you want to see if seeing it meant that you had to believe in things like heaven and Jesus and the saints and all the prophets?” This line is followed by the refrain, “yeah, yeah, yeah” and closes with lines about God riding on a bus all alone, going up to Heaven all alone, “nobody calling on the phone, `cept maybe the Pope in Rome.” In the video for this song, a man dressed as the Pope is shown on the phone while at the beach and an “angel” is shown skating on a boardwalk.

In her other controversial song, St. Teresa, Osborne blends commentary on St. Teresa of Avila with a tale of a drug abusing prostitute. “Oooh, St. Teresa higher than the moon...every stone a story like a rosary,” is one of the lyrics.

The Catholic League announced its objections as follows:

“It is no wonder that Joan Osborne instructs her fans to donate their time and money to Planned Parenthood. It is of a piece with her politics and her prejudices. Her songs and

videos offer a curious mix of both, the effect of which is to dance awfully close to the line of Catholic baiting. If even her admirers see something of the sacrilegious in her work, it is hard to maintain that Osborne doesn't have an agenda. It is our hope that she doesn't let her sentiments regarding Catholicism get in the way of whatever artistic abilities she has."

The media reaction to the league's concerns was substantial. Both Dr. Donohue and executive assistant Susan Fani were interviewed by several newspapers, radio and television shows. The league is delighted that Osborne failed to win an award, but nonetheless pledges to track her work in the future.