

League Protest of Public TV Show Pays Off

On October 30, WNYC-TV, New York City's public TV station, carried a program called "Inversion of Solitude." It advertised the show as "An irreverent video satire based on the life of Saint Therese de Lisieux, whose seemingly uneventful life became the subject of a global media campaign." When the Catholic League learned of the show (through one of its diligent members), it registered its outrage with Neal Hecker of WNYC and with Mayor Rudolph Giuliani.

In a letter addressed to Hecker and Giuliani, the League raised the following question: "Why is the City of New York using taxpayer dollars to satirize a figure that many Catholics revere?" The letter said that if the League did not hear from either WNYC or from Mayor Giuliani before October 28, it would go public with its criticisms. The League had this to say:

"Mayor Giuliani has often spoken of his commitment to fairness and of his long-standing opposition to bigotry. Yet he allows public monies to be spent underwriting programs like 'Inversion of Solitude.' It is not likely that he would allow 'an irreverent satire' about Jews or African Americans, and it is therefore perplexing to note that he tolerates this kind of production when it is aimed at Catholics. This is particularly disconcerting because Mr. Giuliani has frequently proclaimed his proud status as a Roman Catholic. Given that 43 percent of New York is Catholic, Mr. Giuliani's inaction on this issue may very well come back to haunt him the next time he runs for elected office."

On October 25, Roxanne Robinson of **WNYC** called the League to say that, as a result of our objections, a panel was formed to

review the film. The panel determined that there were portions of the program that might well be seen as offensive by Catholics. Therefore, a few minutes of the show were edited out for TV (it had previously been shown in its entirety at the New York Film Festival and at Lincoln Center; predictably, it had received a favorable review in the *New York Times*).

When the show aired it stated that it was edited for TV. While the League is pleased that city officials acted responsibly, it takes no comfort in knowing that the film would have been shown in its entirety had it not been for the League's objections.