

League scores “Picket Fences,” CBS for blatantly anti-Catholic program

The Catholic League has condemned the extreme anti-Catholicism that marked the October 28th airing of the CBS series “Picket Fences.” While many parts of the show were offensive, two segments stood out.

In one scene, held in a church, between the Protestant minister and the Catholic layman, the minister states that the Catholic “point of view on contraception is nuts.” The minister goes on to add that “This birth control thing goes to a larger conspiracy. The Vatican wants the population explosion to help them to achieve world dominion.”

In a later, and even more outrageous scene, a judge lectures the town’s Catholic priest about birth control: “You’ve got to get that stupid rule off the books.” When the priest explains that he could not expressly say that birth control is not a sin, the judge replies “Then tell the Church to go to hell.” He continues by saying “You can’t continue to oppose both abortion and birth control. Not when the number one threat to this planet is overpopulation.”

Then the threats begin. The judge exclaims that “If the Church doesn’t take action, sooner or later the courts will.” He then says that “the day is coming” when the entire Catholic Church will be sued. The scene’s incredible “punch line” is: “And believe me, the last thing that anybody wants is for judges to start legislating religion. But if the Catholic Church stays rigid on some of these rules, that day is coming.”

In a statement released to both the media and to the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, Catholic League President Dr. William A. Donohue said that the October 28th airing of “Picket

Fences" was arguably the most anti-Catholic TV show ever aired. "It is ironic," he said, "that this bigotry should air on CBS. This is the same network that refuses to show the reruns of 'Amos and Andy.' Apparently the degree of tolerance that CBS has for blacks doesn't extend to Catholics."

Commenting on the two most offensive segments, Donohue said: "The fantastic idea that the Catholic Church is conspiring to promote a world population explosion so that it can take dominion of the planet is something only madmen and bigots would believe.

"If the first segment showed that the old-fashioned boogie man ideas about the Vatican dominating the world is alive and well in the 1990s, the second segment illustrated the more contemporary approach to Catholic-baiting. We are now told that if the Catholic Church doesn't conform its teachings on sexuality to the modernist agenda, then the state will reorder the priorities of the Church. Would CBS allow a program that showed the reverse? That is, would CBS air a program showing a Cardinal lecturing a judge in his quarters, admonishing the judge to conform the laws of the nation to the teachings of the Church lest the Church summon its authority to whip the state into line?

"This episode of 'Picket Fences,' a production of David E. Kelley and 20th Century, demonstrates just how invidious and frontal is the assault on Catholics in 1993. It must be answered in like fashion. The Catholic League will register its outrage with both CBS and the sponsors of 'Picket Fences.'

"The Catholic League will not accept the time-worn excuse that this is just fiction. No, 'Amos and Andy' is fiction, too, but it is precisely because of the bigoted content of the show that CBS does not want to be associated with its message. And the message in 'Picket Fences' is the same: stereotype, bait, slander and appeal to hate."