

MAJOR VICTORY SCORED: "OPIE AND ANTHONY" AXED

Media pundits are calling the protest "historic." The subject: the Catholic League's victorious protest of an offensive radio show, "Opie and Anthony."

On August 15, the Feast of the Assumption, a 35 year-old woman and a 37 year-old man had sex in New York's St. Patrick's Cathedral. They did so in front of men, women and children at approximately 4:00 p.m. To make matters worse, a 42-year old man, Paul Mercurio, gave a graphic description of the stunt on his cell phone: he relayed what was happening to Greg (Opie) Hughes and Anthony Cumia on the "Opie and Anthony" show.

The stunt was a staged event. The Virginia couple were trying to win a prize for having sex in a risky place. This is an annual event on the radio show that is sponsored by Boston Beer Co., which produces Samuel Adams beer.

The morning after the sex stunt occurred, the Catholic League lodged a complaint with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and issued a news release the same day. William Donohue demanded that the host station, WNEW, have its license revoked. He had learned that as recently as June, the FCC fined the station \$21,000 for violating its decency standards (three episodes at the cost of \$7,000 each). "Opie and Anthony" was aired in 17 major markets around the nation.

On August 19, FCC Commissioner Michael J. Copps issued an encouraging statement. He said the case would be put "on the fast-track" and that he takes his responsibility "with the utmost seriousness."

He then said if the complaints are true, the FCC "should consider the strongest enforcement action possible against this station, up to and including revocation of the station's license."

The Catholic League supplied the FCC with a tape of the show and a transcript. We also registered a complaint with Viacom, the media-giant conglomerate that owns Infinity Broadcasting (WNEW is an Infinity subsidiary). We have had problems before with Viacom (which owns CBS, Showtime and several other companies).

We won on several levels. The show was dumped on August 22; those associated with it were either fired or suspended; we received an apology from Viacom; and Boston Beer president Jim Koch called to apologize as well. Being satisfied with these outcomes, we said it was no longer necessary for the station's license to be revoked.