

MEET HBO'S "THE YOUNG POPE"

Bill Donohue comments on the new HBO series, "The Young Pope," which debuts January 15:

Most normal men and women will be watching the Packers-Cowboys game on Sunday. Owing to the fact that Monday is a federal holiday, the party goers will have had their fill of beer by the time the game ends around 8:00 p.m. This guarantees that none will tune into HBO's "The Young Pope" at 9:00 p.m.

This is HBO's first mistake: real men and women watch football and drink beer—they don't get their jollies watching an ideologically driven flick about some tortured pope who has "power-mad dreams." But perhaps I am too harsh: the target audience never threw a football, much less watched a game on TV.

The man behind this fictional series is Paolo Sorrentino. Pope Pius XIII's real name, viewers learn, is not Leonard Belardo—it's *Lenny* Belardo. His hip name corresponds with his habit of chain smoking and drinking diet soda. But the Brooklynite (he is America's first pope) also has a few flaws.

According to *TV Guide Magazine*, Pope Pius is "cruel, deceptive and a bit of an ass." *Variety* says he can be "cruel, vindictive, surprisingly compassionate, and justifiably paranoid." Breitbart says the pope comes across as "a lustful (possibly bisexual) narcissist." The *Hollywood Reporter* calls him "arrogant, whimsical and hilariously destructive," a pontiff who "comes across as borderline anti-Christ." Oh, yes, "he personally doesn't believe in God."

Indiewire.com praises Sorrentino for his devilish abilities. "Anyone angry with Lenny is asked to shift their [sic] ire toward the church." Mission accomplished: it's not the tormented pope who is the problem, it's his lousy church.

What does Sorrentino have against the Church? An atheist, he bemoans it's structure. "The Vatican is a state with a vertical power structure." Perhaps this genius can tell us which nation-state has a horizontal power structure.

The pope's advisor, Cardinal Michael Spencer, is played by James Cromwell. The character he plays has "completely forgott[en] the purpose for which Christ founded the church." This explains why he plays his role so effortlessly.

Cromwell notes that "there are sequences about pedophilia in America," and "the whole homosexual issue." This suggests bad editing: there is no need to treat these matters as separate issues—in real life, homosexual priests raped the boys, not pedophiles (sex with prepubescent males account for less than 5 percent of the abuse cases.)

In an interview with the *Hollywood Reporter*, Cromwell tells us how horrible the Catholic Church in America is for opposing abortion. He boasts that abortion is not a divisive issue in Europe. He's right. There is also little debate there anymore about putting to death the depressed, the handicapped, the sick, and the elderly, increasingly without their consent.

So, guys and girls, keep the brews flowing on Sunday, unless, of course, you want to watch a chain-smoking, bit of an ass, borderline anti-Christ, possibly bisexual, cruel, vindictive, paranoid pope who doesn't believe in God. This should go over big with the Meryl Streep gang.

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