

MTV'S "THE REAL WORLD" SLAMS CATHOLICISM

The sixth season premiere of MTV's "The Real World" opened July 16 with an attack on Catholicism. The show featured a group of strangers from various backgrounds who come to work and live together. Two of the seven characters were identified as Catholics; curiously, we learned nothing of the religious affiliation of the other five. What we did learn was that Catholicism was viewed with disdain. Here is a sample:

- The roommate of a Catholic woman says that discussions about the Catholic Church make her "scared."
- The same person admits that she is proudly anti-Christian because the Church is "really bad for women."
- A "Virgin Mary night light" is dubbed "kind of funny" by the owner.
- Catholicism is labeled "dogmatic Christianity."
- The Catholic woman is accused of trying to bring her values into the bedroom; she is also targeted by the group as a candidate that "we're gonna corrupt."

The league sent the following statement to the press regarding this show:

"MTV has often been criticized for showing bad taste, but its latest venture into Catholic bashing surpasses its previous decadence. None of the attacks on Catholicism can be seen as merely controversial commentary, for if that were the case then other groups would be selected for ridicule as well. No, this is calculated old-fashioned anti-Catholicism.

"No doubt the reason that Catholicism is made the butt of such derision has to do with the contrasting values that MTV and the Church have: MTV's hedonistic message is constantly being challenged by the Roman Catholic Church and that is not something the trendy-types can stand.

"It is our hope that TV media critics take due note of MTV's latest foray against elementary standards of decency. The more the public learns of MTV's bigotry, the less likely they will be to support it. We hope to do our part by contacting the program's sponsors."

In response to the league's news release, a formal statement was issued to the media by Bunim/Murray Productions; Mary Ellis Bunim and John Murray are the executive producers of "The Real World." They defended the program by saying that it is "a non-scripted show, based on diversity, where everything expressed is the opinion of the speaker. It is a program where we make it a point to bring in various voices that express non-edited, personal opinions of cast members."

This is quite a statement. What Bunim and Murray want us to believe is that the actors are free to espouse anything they feel (somehow we don't believe an actor would last long if what he espoused was anti-Semitic). In any event, someone decided to identify who the Catholics are, and someone decided it wouldn't be a bad idea to let the anti-Catholic bigots have free reign at them. Finally, if Bunim and Murray are the producers for this remarkably free-spirited, open-ended show, then they ultimately must take responsibility for its content—scripted or not.