

PASSING THE TORCH ON “NOTHING SACRED”

William Donohue offered the following comments on the Nov. 6 episode of the ABC show, “Nothing Sacred”:

“Most of the Catholic League’s criticisms of ‘Nothing Sacred’ have focused on the lead character, Fr. Ray. Our central complaint has been the positive spin that has been put on this dissenting priest and the negative spin that has been put on Catholics loyal to Church teachings. Now it appears that Fr. Ray is being rehabilitated. What hasn’t changed, however, is the bottom line of the show: Fr. Ray is simply passing his political torch to others.

“The interaction between Fr. Eric and a young seminarian, Nathan, demonstrates what’s happening. Fr. Eric, the show’s ‘traditionalist,’ is busy preaching tolerance to a young seminarian, Nathan. Labeled as ‘rigid,’ Nathan proves his rigidity by defending the teachings of the Catholic Church. To the rescue is Fr. Eric, the enlightened priest who brandishes his enlightenment by questioning the wisdom of Church teachings. Anyone with an I.Q. over 10 gets the message.

“Though Fr. Eric rightly refuses Holy Communion to a protesting non-Catholic, he cannot do so without expressing second thoughts. ‘If following a rule means shutting someone out,’ he says, ‘then maybe it’s time to rethink the rule.’ This triumph of popularity over principal, stated in the language of compassion and inclusion, is what drives the show. It sets in motion the show’s theses: the Church must accept the will of dissidents or pay the price of irrelevancy. Though social science data uniformly prove the opposite, i.e., the more trendy the religion the less adherents it has, none of this seems to matter.

“When Fr. Eric speaks of the disillusionment that priests encounter, and the need to ‘minister in the present,’ he shows the influence of Fr. Ray. No wonder he defends his unorthodox mentor by saying that ‘his heart is in the right place.’ It’s a shame his head isn’t.”