

# READER'S DIGEST WITHDRAWS RED FLAG

The June *Reader's Digest* included an article by William Ecenbarger on the subject of shoplifting entitled, "They're Stealing You Blind." As stated in a letter to the president, the Catholic League said the piece was "vintage *Reader's Digest* fare: it is accurate, timely and informative." But it also chastised the publication for including "two references to a shoplifter's religion, namely, Catholicism," descriptions the league labeled "gratuitous and deliberately baiting in its message."

The league drew attention to pages 97 and 100 where readers learned that "Fran" is "a devout Catholic." We wanted to know "why is this germane to the story? What was the point of mentioning that this woman 'goes to Mass every Sunday'? Why was there no mention of the religious affiliation of any of the other shoplifters?"

We are happy to report that *Reader's Digest* responded professionally and said that while the author "did not mean to single out or slight Catholics in any way," they understand the league's objections. "In hindsight, we fully understand why this reference could have been offensive. For this we are sorry." Importantly, the publication said that "In any future uses of this story by our editors around the world, we have decided to drop the references to 'Catholic' and 'Mass.'"