

SHOWTIME TO AIR "THE BORGHIAS"

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the upcoming series, "The Borgias," to air on Showtime:

On April 3, Showtime, the pay-per-view sister station of CBS, will commence a nine-part series on "The Borgias"; Bravo will pick it up shortly after it premieres. Rodrigo Borgia, who became Pope Alexander VI, was an extortionist who led a life of debauchery, fathering four illegitimate children. That he was a disgrace to the papacy is not in question; rather, the question is why Showtime decided it was worth spending \$45 million to produce it.

The series was written by Irish-born atheist Neil Jordan. His previous work includes directing "The Butcher Boy," which featured Sinead O'Connor playing a foul-mouthed Virgin Mary. The producer, James Flynn, has admitted that the series takes "poetic license" with the historical account, thus assuring us of a sensationalized presentation of an already sensational story.

Given the "poetic license," it makes us wonder whether Alexander VI will be portrayed as friendly to the Jews, as he was in real life. Moreover, will there be any mention of Pope Pius II taking him to task? In a scathing letter he wrote when Borgia was a cardinal, the pope admonished him to change his ways and start living a "well ordered life." But his effort was in vain: Borgia continued with his life of profligacy.

It is worth recalling that the first pope, St. Peter, denied Christ three times. So Catholics don't expect perfection from its clergy. This, however, is beside the point: the most immediate issue is why Showtime decided to gift Catholics with this series during the Lenten season.

It might be worth asking Showtime whether it plans to run a series on Muhammad during Ramadan that features his marriage to a 9-year-old girl, Aisha. Muhammad at the time was in his fifties.

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