

ABC NEWS ERRS IN REPORT ON VATICAN ROLE IN HOLOCAUST

The ABC news broadcast of May 26, 1994 incorrectly reported that the Vatican had accepted "co-responsibility" for the Holocaust. The Catholic League sent the following letter to Peter Jennings, requesting a retraction for the error. Dr William A. Donohue said of the incident: "It is not certain what led ABC to err in this matter. But what matters most at this juncture is that the error be acknowledged. It would also help, of course, if ABC spent more time verifying its stories before airing them."

Dear Mr. Jennings:

In the news broadcast of May 26, you erred in saying that the Catholic Church acknowledged co-responsibility and guilt for the Holocaust. What actually happened was that one German lay theologian had reached this conclusion in his preparatory remarks to the German and Polish bishops. The statement by Hans Herman Henrix was not even approved by the German and Polish Bishops' Conference, much less by the Church itself. Yet you said that this position emanated "from the heart of the Roman Catholic Church." Bill Blakemore contributed to the confusion by incorrectly labeling Henrix's position paper as a "Church document." As the Vatican pointed out immediately, the draft was "in no way a projected document of the Holy See."

In light of the above, it is only fitting that ABC News issue a retraction.

Sincerely,

William A Donohue, Ph.D.
President

“PICKET FENCES” OFFENDS AGAIN

The April 29th showing of the CBS program “Picket Fences” was a textbook case of anti-Catholicism in the media. The following is a brief summary of the show’s content.

The script is based on the sexually deviant practices of a Catholic priest, Father Gary Barrett. Father Barrett, we are told, has a shoe fetish, one who (according to the distorted perspective of the writers) violated his vow of celibacy by having a sexual experience with a woman’s shoe. Upon hearing of Father Barrett’s fetish, the local mayor asks “He has sex with a boot?” He then goes on TV to warn children that Father Barrett is a shoe fetish priest.

When Father Barrett is confronted by his bishop, he defends himself by saying “How many priests are totally celibate, John?” He adds, “Damn it, John. The Church has allowed pedophiles to keep their cloth. That’s a reason for the paranoia. Because they failed to act swiftly in those cases.”

Discussing masturbation, a boy tells his father that “They [the Catholic Church] say you’re only supposed to let semen out to make babies, nothing else.” Then, in a voice suggesting the boy is quoting Catholic dogma, he offers “Better to plant your seed in the belly of a whore than on the ground. Even during Earth Week. I looked it up. Maybe that’s why Father Barrett used a shoe. So it wouldn’t hit the ground.”

The same boy tells the Jewish attorney who is representing Father Barrett that he wants to become a Jew, because unlike Catholics, Jews who masturbate don’t go to hell. The attorney admits he’s no expert on Christianity but then opines the following: “This idea of complete celibacy. This did not come

from Jesus. All his disciples were married. The tradition of celibacy for priests did not come until a thousand years later." The boy responds, "Well. There's still gotta be a reason for the rule. Fifty million Catholics can't be wrong." To which the attorney says, "People will tell you all kinds of things."

In another scene, the mayor complains about his alzheimer's condition and then, in a sorrowful voice, whines to Father Gary Barrett: Do you know the only thing I have, Gary? Prayer. Faith in God—that's my only chance. Imagine how I feel today to see that my vehicle to God—my priest—touches himself holding women's shoes. You're supposed to be my hope. Damn you. Damn you." There is also a scene where children are showing T-shirts that are being worn locally. One has a picture of a boot with the inscription "I Get a Boot Out of Catholicism," while the other shows a picture of the sole of a shoe with the legend "Save Soles With Father Barrett."

The show closes with the parishioners rising to the defense of Father Barrett to keep his parish. Even the mayor and the bishop offer their reluctant support. The boy in the show concludes by saying: "So he's still the priest. He gets to keep the shoes. Well, then I guess that means it's not a sin to milk the lizard."

Dr. William A. Donohue offered the following statement:

"David E. Kelley, the executive producer of 'Picket Fences,' continued his Catholic-baiting with this show. The April 29th episode is even worse than the October 28th show. It is clear that Mr. Kelley and CBS think that they can get away with their hatred and bigotry. But the Catholic League is prepared to begin a sustained campaign against the station, the show and the sponsors, and will not yield until Catholics are treated with the same degree of respect that CBS treats African-Americans, Jews and gays.

"CBS will not air reruns of 'Amos and Andy' because it offends the sensibilities of blacks. Perhaps someone from CBS can explain why their sensitivity doesn't extend to Catholics. And perhaps it can be explained what the source of Mr. Kelley's bigotry is."

The Catholic League is the nation's largest Catholic civil rights organization. It defends the right of Catholics—lay and clergy alike—to participate in American life without defamation or discrimination.