

ABC — THERE THEY GO AGAIN

ABC-TV, continuing its assault on Catholic sensibilities, used its July 21 “ABC World News Tonight With Peter Jennings” to deliver what the Catholic League termed “a biased attack against Catholic hospitals.”

Focusing on mergers between Catholic and community hospitals, the segment raised dire warnings about “a virtual (Catholic) monopoly on health care” with “severe consequences for patients”—i.e., lack of abortions or contraceptives.

In a letter to ABC News president David Westin, league president William Donohue criticized the program for ignoring legitimate health care issues while serving “the narrow pro-abortion ideology of those such as Frances Kissling, whose bogus paper organization, Catholics for a Free Choice, you inexplicably chose to highlight.

“The fact that Roe v. Wade permits a person to have an abortion does not require private health care facilities to perform abortions. If privately run hospitals choose to forego certain procedures...in order to avail themselves and their patients of the resources and quality care of a Catholic health care facility, that is...exercising their freedom of choice.

“An objective report would have balanced discussion of the few ‘services’ which will not be available at such merged institutions with a listing of the many health care services which will be maintained and enhanced because Catholic hospitals are willing to merge their resources with those of floundering community hospitals.

“You owe your viewers a follow-up story in which the positive contributions of Catholic health care facilities...are given adequate airing.”

CONGRESS MUST OVERSEE NEA

In a reversal of its vote last year, the U.S. House of Representatives has approved continued federal funding for the National Endowment for the Arts.

In doing so, said Catholic League president William Donohue, the House has assumed responsibility for applying decency standards in the awarding of NEA grants:

“Last month, the Supreme Court made clear that Congress has the power to set and enforce standards of decency in appropriating money for the arts. In view of the NEA’s penchant for funding offensive material, the House vote to continue funding for this agency makes it incumbent upon our elected Representatives to exercise that power. A good place to start would be defunding the Manhattan Theatre Club, which is producing the blasphemous ‘Corpus Christi,’ in which playwright Terrence McNally depicts Jesus having sex with his apostles.

“Taxpayers should not be forced to defame their own religious beliefs by providing the funding for such a production. If members of Congress insist on continuing this subsidy for the rich, they must at least exercise their oversight responsibility, and see that public monies are not used to trash our moral values and religious beliefs.”

“POLISH WEDDING” IS LESS THAN ENGAGING

“What else is new?”

That was the reaction of the Catholic League to the negative portrayal of Polish-Catholics in Fox Searchlight’s “Polish Wedding.” League director of communications Rick Hinshaw viewed the movie and offered the following observations:

“The real target of this caricature is the Polish-American working class, whose marriages are portrayed as the loveless results of out-of-wedlock pregnancies. Polish women in this movie, according to one reviewer, ‘know how to lift their skirts, but not how to unwrap a condom.’

“Not surprisingly, their Catholic faith is made the object of rank hypocrisy. There is the mother, Jadzia, who prays before a statue of the Virgin Mary as she returns home from a tryst with her lover; the promiscuous daughter, Hala, who aspires to be the Church’s model of purity by crowning the Virgin’s statue at the May procession; and the priest, who assaults the pregnant Hala for ruining the May crowning.

“All in all, it’s simply more of the same in terms of what we’ve come to expect from Hollywood. When the Catholic Church is not the primary target of an in-your-face attack—as in the Disney/Miramax production, ‘Priest’—it must at least have a supporting role in contributing to familial and societal dysfunctions. Rarely, if ever, is there a positive role for the Church in movie portrayals of Catholicism.”