

ABC AXES “NOTHING SACRED”

ABC has finally decided to cancel “Nothing Sacred.” Though the network says that it is possible some episodes may appear this summer, several media sources have indicated that it is highly unlikely. The writers for the show have all been released.

Catholic League president William Donohue commented on this today:

“It is no secret that ABC stood by this failed show longer than any other program. Never before has such a loser of a show been given more hype and more preferential treatment than ‘Nothing Sacred.’ Had there not been a political agenda at work, the marketplace would have spelled the fate of ‘Nothing’ long ago.

“It is certain that had the show been a smashing success, everyone associated with it would have laughed at the Catholic League for giving it free publicity. But the last laugh was on them. It is our victory and we are proud of it. The fact that we drove away 37 sponsors is testimony to our success.

“Obviously, the show also failed because it was—contrary to what all the TV experts said—a lousy show. Only a masochist would love to watch a depressing show about a dissident priest in a dysfunctional parish. The good news is that the supply of masochists is dreadfully small.

“While the Catholic League never said that it spoke for all Catholics, it is beyond dispute that the league is a better barometer of Catholic public opinion than the groups that opposed us. Both the league and its adversaries tried to rally the troops, persuade viewers and influence sponsors. And they lost. The fact of the matter is that from the very beginning there never was anything sacred about this show. Though some may not want to believe it, therein lies the real reason why it bombed.”

VATICAN STATEMENT ON HOLOCAUST DESERVES PRAISE

The Vatican document, "We Remember, a Reflection on the Shoah," defends the role of Pope Pius XII during World War II while also acknowledging that some Roman Catholics were guilty of misdeeds. It implores Christians to abide by a "moral imperative" that will never allow for another Holocaust.

Catholic League president William Donohue commented on reaction to the document:

"Already there are those who are carping that the document doesn't go far enough. But the Vatican was only right to defend Pope Pius XII. After all, his efforts at saving Jews was duly recognized during and after the war by such luminaries as the World Jewish Congress, the Hebrew Commission, Golda Meir, the *New York Times*, Albert Einstein and Emilio Zolli (Zolli was the chief rabbi in Rome at the time of the occupation who converted to Catholicism after the war and took Pius' name as his baptismal name). Moreover, the Israeli diplomat and scholar, Pinchas Lapide, concluded his study of the Church's response to the Holocaust by crediting the Church with saving as many as 860,000 Jews.

"Those who reflexively criticize this document should ponder the words of Robert Kempner, the American who served as deputy chief of the Nuremburg war-crimes tribunal: 'All the arguments and writings eventually used by the Catholic Church against Hitler only provoked suicide; the execution of Jews was followed by that of Catholic priests.' William Rubinstein, author of the new book, *The Myth of Rescue*, similarly maintains that the Church could not realistically have done

more to save Jews during the war.

“To those who say that the Church could have done more, it is time to say, ‘had others done as much, more Jews would have been saved.’”

ABSOLUT AD EXPLOITS CATHOLIC SACRAMENT

An ad by Absolut, the vodka product of Sweden, exploits the Catholic sacrament of Holy Eucharist. The ad, which appears on p. 321 in the March issue of *Vogue*, is a story-book tale about a priest on an island. Throughout the ad, reference is made to many Catholic symbols and themes, all but one of which stays within the bounds of light humor. The Catholic League objects, however, to the statement regarding the Eucharist.

The line that the league objects to refers to “the precious ciborium full of what looked like everybody’s least favorite EASTER candy.” The ciborium is used to hold the Communion Host.

Catholic League president William Donohue explained the league’s position:

“Had Absolut left out the line about the ciborium, we would not have objected. But to refer to what Catholics believe to be the Real Presence of Jesus as nothing more than ‘everybody’s least favorite EASTER candy’ is reprehensible. And to do this during Lent is particularly offensive.

“We are letting the vodka stewards know about our objection and look for Absolut to pull the ad immediately.”

MARYLAND JUDGE VIOLATES CHURCH-STATE BOUNDARIES

Frederick County Circuit Judge Mary Ann Stepler has issued a preliminary injunction ordering a Catholic high school to allow two of its students, who have expelled, to attend school pending a trial. The students, a boy and a girl, were expelled after a sexual encounter in the hallway at St. John's Literary Institution at Prospect Hall. They are suing the school claiming they are victims of racial discrimination.

League president William Donohue offered his ideas about this issue:

"For St. John's Literary and for the expelled students, what matters is that justice be done. What matters for the Catholic League is that justice does not come from the bench. Independent of the innocence or the guilt of the students is the right of Catholic schools to determine their own disciplinary measures without intrusion from the courts. When the judiciary engages in imperialism, as it clearly has in this case, then the entire structure of democratic governance is jeopardized.

"Those who clamor for separation of church and state should support the Catholic League's position. If they don't, then it suggests that their real First Amendment interest is in exploiting church-state issues for political purposes.

"We hope that the school will fight this to the end. What is at stake is nothing less than the autonomy of Catholic schools."

Maryland media should contact Catholic League Baltimore

chapter president Robert Forrest for interviews. He can be reached at (410) 825-4922.

SOFTWARE FROM MICROSOFT TAINTED WITH PREJUDICE

Microsoft Bookshelf 98, a software reference library, continues a pattern of prejudice against Roman Catholics that was evident in earlier versions of this software. In a search for “Catholic,” there is a subsection of quotations that lists 24 comments by public figures, past and present, on Catholicism. Fully sixteen of them are very negative remarks, some of which are downright insulting. A check for “Protestant” turns up 7 quotations, three of which are negative statements about Protestantism (two from the same author); remarkably, there is an anti-Catholic quote in this subset. Under “Jew,” there are no quotations about Jews or Judaism.

William Donohue, the league’s president, shared his own thoughts on this matter:

“I don’t know how much more proof skeptics need before they learn that prejudice against Catholicism is the last acceptable bias in America. To think that two-thirds of the Microsoft Bookshelf entries under ‘Catholic’ reveal an animus against Catholicism is startling. Readers who want to learn what radical feminists, embittered religious writers, rock stars and intellectuals think about the Roman Catholic Church won’t be disappointed in accessing this software. A check under ‘pope’ and ‘nun’ demonstrate the same bias.

"It is a credit to Jews that they aren't subject to the same treatment; Catholics have a long way to go before they are afforded the same degree of respect. Fortunately, there are signs that Catholics are waking up, but it won't be anytime too soon before the corporate world shoves its bigotry back in the closet where it belongs.

"We'll register our complaint with Microsoft. Perhaps someone there with a conscience will ask whoever is to blame for this outrage to explain himself. The answer, of course, will either be truthful or a lie. Either way, we hope he gets canned."

"NOTHING SACRED" BREAKS ITS OWN RECORD

Last Saturday night, the ABC show, "Nothing Sacred," broke its own record for drawing the least number of viewers. The show scored 3.0 in the ratings when aired at 9:00 p.m., EST. As the *New York Post* put it, "That's worse than many of the series on mini-networks WB and UPN—which is why industry insiders yesterday were buzzing that ABC will pull the priest drama from the lineup as soon as this week."

Catholic League president William Donohue issued the following remarks today:

"This is not a good week for the corporate boys at Disney/ABC. First they learned that ABC made TV history when it fell to fourth place in the Sweeps ratings, finishing behind FOX. Now they learn that all the cash they've spent hyping 'Nothing' was money down the toilet.

"The handwriting has been on the wall from last September, but

the politically brazen writers, producers and directors of 'Nothing' refuse to listen to the voice of grassroots Catholics. However, they can't buck the market and that's the beauty of a democracy.

"The apologists for 'Nothing' have said for months that the reason the show is a bomb is because it is forced to compete with NBC's star-studded Thursday night lineup. So ABC switched the show to Saturday night. When that didn't work, actor Kevin Anderson complained that too many people were 'frying eggs' at 8:00 p.m. So ABC switched the show to 9:00 p.m. And now the show has broken its own lousy record, making the Nielsen auditors wonder if the only Catholics left watching the show are those too comatose to know what they're watching.

"Maybe they should put the show on at 3:00 a.m., that way they wouldn't have to fight the competition or worry about people flipping eggs. But it seems their minds are too scrambled to figure that one out."

"FOUR CORNERS" WAS NO "NOTHING SACRED"

The CBS show, "Four Corners," was cut after just two shows. The drama featured a Catholic priest who was pursued by an attractive young woman.

At its debut, "Four Corners" ranked 65th in program households for the week of Feb. 23-March 1, posting a modest 6.9/11 ratings/share split; the second show lost 45% of its audience from the week before. In contrast, the ABC show, "Nothing Sacred," which features a dissenting priest who doubts the existence of God, has averaged 107th place in the rankings and

has posted ratings/share numbers that are much inferior to those garnered by “Four Corners.”

William Donohue commented as follows:

“Some were surprised that the Catholic League didn’t complain about ‘Four Corners,’ and no one was more astonished than *Los Angeles Times* critic, Howard Rosenberg. But these critics miss the point: we never criticized ‘Four Corners’ because, unlike ‘Nothing Sacred,’ there was nothing offensive about it.

‘That in the CBS show Father Tomas was the subject of sexual advances is of no consequence; he resisted all of them and was never portrayed in a manner that denigrated his role as a priest. For the same reason, the Catholic League never criticized Father Ray for being tempted by an old flame. Our singular criticism of ‘Nothing Sacred’ has been that it is pure propaganda for those who want to put a positive spin on dissenting priests and a negative spin on those who are loyal to the Church.

“It seems plain that ‘Four Corners’ and ‘Nothing Sacred’ have failed because they exploit Catholic themes without satisfying the hunger that viewers have for religious-based drama programs. The remaining difference is that ABC has an agenda and CBS does not. But it’s only a matter of time before ‘Nothing Sacred’ gets kicked in the can.”

1997 ANNUAL REPORT ON ANTI-CATHOLICISM PUBLISHED

The Catholic League’s *1997 Annual Report on Anti-Catholicism* has just been released. The league’s fourth annual

report, it is the largest and most detailed account of anti-Catholic incidents published to date.

The report includes a preface, executive summary and findings section. The findings are drawn from offenses emanating from activist organizations, the arts, business and the workplace, education, government and the media; there is also a miscellaneous section. Offensive cartoons, as well as other significant graphics, are interspersed throughout the report.

Complimentary copies are being sent to many in the media and other professions. The cost to the public is \$10 a copy.

Catholic League president William Donohue issued the following statement on the report today:

"It is safe to say that 1997 was a banner year for the Catholic League, arguably the most successful in the league's history. This annual report provides, in one volume, all the evidence that one needs to demonstrate the nature and multidimensional quality of anti-Catholicism in our society. It is not exhaustive, but it is a reliable guide to what confronts Catholics and the Catholic Church today.

"It is my hope that those who are interested in civil liberties, especially as they bear on religious freedom, will access this report and put it to good use. This publication is certainly suitable for classroom discussion, at any grade level. In the end, the purpose of this report is to document the need for all Americans to become more intolerant of anti-Catholic bigotry in their midst. The goal of the Catholic League is to make anti-Catholicism as unacceptable as other forms of bigotry. But it cannot be said too strongly that we seek neither victim status nor inclusion in the circle of political correctness in the process."