

SERRANO'S LAST STAND AT THE SMITHSONIAN

In the last issue of *Catalyst*, we printed a letter from Dr. Donohue to David Umansky, Communications Director of the Smithsonian Institution, protesting the institution's invitation to artist Andres Serrano to open Hispanic Heritage Month. Our objection centered on the anti-Catholic work of Serrano, specifically his contribution, "Piss Christ," which features a crucifix submerged in a jar of urine. It was the league's position that Serrano was unfit to be accorded the right to open Hispanic Heritage Month at the prestigious institution, located in our nation's capital.

In an unusually frank letter to Dr. Donohue, J. Dennis O'Connor, Provost of the Smithsonian, wrote to explain the Smithsonian's position and to convey to him the future of Andres Serrano's welcome at the institution.

O'Connor said to Dr. Donohue that "I share your concern," and then indicated that the Smithsonian "must be careful not to appear to be censoring free speech or restricting public debate." But he also said that the committee that selected Serrano "was aware of the earlier controversy surrounding Mr. Serrano's work." Accordingly, the committee "sought assurances from both him [Serrano] and his assistant that he would discuss his recent work, avoid his controversial series, and exchange views with other panelists." Serrano's "controversial series" includes exhibitions involving dead animals, brains, blood and urine.

Serrano initially agreed to abide by the Smithsonian's request, saying that he wanted to move beyond the controversies of the past. O'Connor states that "The employees [of the Smithsonian] would not have suggested inviting Mr. Serrano without believing that he would avoid showing his

controversial works that had offended so many in previous years and that he would present a program appropriate for a general invitation audience.”

But Serrano reneged on his commitment. Here is what O’Connor concluded: “Since this program’s occurrence, I have gathered a good deal of information about its background and actual development, and I believe that Mr. Serrano violated his understanding with the Hispanic Heritage Planning Committee. As a result, I would be extremely reluctant to consider such an invitation to him in the future, and have conveyed this judgment to the staff.”

The Catholic League regrets that Serrano was invited in the first place, and is hardly surprised that the artist violated his word. But we are nonetheless pleased with the position of the Smithsonian not to invite him ever again.

LEAGUE ATTACK ON SLEEPERS SUCCEEDS

The Catholic League attack on the Warner Bros. movie, *Sleepers*, garnered incredible media attention and received a warm reception on the part of journalists, reviewers and radio and TV talk show hosts.

The Catholic League’s press conference on the movie was a mob scene of reporters. The league contends that the movie, based on a book by that name, has no basis in fact and unfairly maligns Catholic institutions and priests. The reaction of the media was almost uniformly favorable to the Catholic League’s position.

Janet Maslin of the *New York Times* put it nicely when she wrote that while it's possible that the story is true, "It's also possible that Santa and the elves spend all year at the North Pole, making a list and checking it twice."

A woman reporter from ABC-TV in New York caught up with author Lorenzo Carcaterra at his home and asked him about the charges. The author not only refused to answer any questions, he slammed his front door on the reporter. And when the media called the publisher of the book and the producers and directors of the movie to debate Dr. Donohue, they all said no.

The Catholic League took the issue a notch higher by asking S.I. Newhouse, the president of Random House (the parent company of Ballantine Books, which published *Sleepers*) to conduct an independent investigation of this matter.

DUMBING-DOWN OF CHRISTMAS

If a Martian were to descend on our shores in the month of December, he would no doubt conclude that Christmas is a fun time. What else he would conclude is uncertain, but it is not likely that he would identify the holiday season with the birth of Jesus Christ.

Each year it gets worse. Department store employees are instructed not to say "Merry Christmas," school calendars dub the Christmas vacation the "Winter Holiday," kids sing songs about reindeer, catalogs hawk nativity scenes proclaiming "It's a Girl," Elvis displaces Christ in the manger, "Happy Holidays" becomes the proverbial greeting, the Christmas tree becomes an ersatz religious symbol, cats, bears, mice and dogs—including real ones—are used in crèches, dishes are sold

with animals replacing the Holy Family and TV features Charlie Brown.

What gives? The trivialization of Christmas is frequently seen as the consequence of an overly-commercial society. While there is some truth to this, it hardly satisfies as a response.

The dumbing-down of Christmas has more to do with our nervousness over the public expression of religion than the machinations of Madison Avenue. There have always been those who would sell Christmas down the drain for a buck, but only in recent times have we become so panicky over not offending non-Christians that we have literally done a 180 by trashing Christianity itself.

It has become a badge of virtue in some quarters not to publicly celebrate one's own religious heritage. It is virtuous, we are told, to demonstrate tolerance for those who might be offended by a public display of our religion. But what does this say about those who think this way and what does it say about those whom we seek not offend?

At bottom, those who opt to dumb-down Christmas are basically ashamed to be called Christians. They think this way because they have become convinced that so many nasty things have been done by Christians that they have no reason to publicly celebrate their heritage. In other words, they are badly educated about history and Christianity.

Surely there are pages of Christianity that are full of blood; the same is true of all religions. But must it be said one more time that such chapters in Christianity represent profound departures from what Christianity teaches? Do we stop loving our parents when we learn that they are sinners, too? Doesn't it matter more what the tenets of a religion espouse than what some do in its name?

We must also get over the hopelessly romantic notion that

societies untouched by Christianity were essentially a Garden of Eden. No, those who lived closer to nature than we do were neither the egalitarians that some proclaim nor the friendly spirits that they have been made out to be. They raped, beat and killed each other with alacrity.

In a review of Rodney Stark's new book, *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History*, Peter Monaghan had this to say: "Christianity offered security, health care, and loving family life. It provided a coherent culture but did not require converts to abandon ethnic ties. It also granted women higher status than the Greco-Roman world as a whole. Christianity forbade abortion and infanticide, while Greco-Romans practiced both commonly, killing many women and girls."

And what does it say about those whom we seek not to offend when we decide to bury the meaning of Christmas? Aren't we really saying that they are so intolerant of our religious customs and traditions that we would rather duck Christmas than face their wrath? If so, that means they have a problem, and so do we.

There is no need to be "in-your-face" about Christmas. But there is also no need to subvert the meaning of Christmas by submerging our heritage in public. There is a better way: we should encourage people of every faith to make manifest their religion in the public square. That's what diversity really means. Not to do so is to allow the dumbing-down of Christmas to proceed towards its ultimate end. It's one thing for Fidel Castro to ban Christmas, quite another for us to participate in its democratic demise.

Merry Christmas from all of us at the Catholic League.

THE REAL STORY OF PIUS XII AND THE JEWS

by James Bogle

Reprinted with permission from *The Salisbury Review*, Spring 1996.

Over the last year a number of commentators have sought to rehash old and ill-informed accusations in an attempt to undermine the reputation of Pope Pius XII. His war-time effort to save Jewish lives has, amazingly, been the principal area of attack. The BBC program *Reputations*, repeated on 14th February 1996, was one especially virulent attack. It was followed by a review in *The Times* by religious affairs correspondent, Ruth Gledhill, which attacked Pius XII apparently on the strength of the BBC program alone. Later, the producer of the program, Jonathan Lewis, attempted to explain his position in the liberal Catholic Journal *The Tablet*.

Pius XII was one of the few world leaders outside Jewry itself who was quick to recognize the danger of Nazism. Former Israeli diplomat Pinchas Lapide, in his book *The Last Three Popes and the Jews* demonstrates convincingly the consistent and active protection provided to Jews in Europe by the papacy. He does not shrink from strong criticism of other parts of the Catholic Church where necessary and of some Catholic governments in particular. Further, he commands respect from those reading from a Jewish perspective.

It is estimated that the actions of Pius XII directly led to the saving of 800,000 Jewish lives during the war. The estimate of 800,000 Jewish lives is based upon the testimony of the post-war government of the recently created State of Israel which recognized and honored that pope's contribution.

The Israelis recognized the figure and a forest of as many trees was planted in commemoration in the Negeb, SE of Jerusalem, and was shown to Pope Paul VI with some ceremony on his first state visit to Israel. Rev. Fr. Jean Charles-Roux, now a Rosinian priest living in London and whose father was French Ambassador to the Holy See in the 30's, lived with his family in Rome during the fateful pre-war period. He recalls that the Pope told his father as early as 1935 that the new regime in Germany was "diabolical." The Ambassador frequently warned his government but the general reaction in France seems to have been that it was good to see the back of the Prussian militarist and that it was no bad thing that an Austrian-Czech house painter was now Chancellor.

The reaction in the USA and Britain was scarcely different at that time; and even later when they must have begun to know about the camps. The U.S. government accepted a total of 10,000 – 15,000 Jewish refugees throughout the war. – a truly scandalous statistic.

Britain was little better and before the war the government had been full of "appeasers," the Duke of Windsor visited Hitler and Lloyd George even went so far as to call him "the greatest living German"!

Ambassador Charles-Roux's own government in Paris (and the British government) were deaf to the pleas of the Vatican to assist the German internal resistance to the Nazi government. From the very beginning Pius XII tried to persuade the Allied governments to support the German opposition to Hitler, but since they would not listen to men like the Anglican Bishop Bell of Chichester or to the few Jews who had escaped from Germany to Britain and America, they would not and did not listen to a Pope. Men like Adam von Trott zu Sulz (he had been a Rhodes Scholar at Balliol), Peter Yorek von Wartenburg and many other leading Germans who later formed the Kreisau circle, made continuous, repeated, energetic and ultimately futile attempts to reach and persuade the British government

to back, or even talk with, the German resistance to Hitler. They were all killed in the 20th July plot to assassinate Hitler, the last in a long line of foiled attempts to get rid of the dictator, which was triggered by the Roman Catholic officer, Count Claus Schenk von Stauffenberg. Stauffenberg was shot out of hand. Other conspirators were not so lucky. They were tried by the infamous "People's Court" and hanged by piano wire from butchers' hooks of Plötzensee prison. This was filmed on Hitler's orders so that he could watch it himself later.

Count von Galen, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Munster, was another outspoken critic of the racial and eugenic policies of the Nazis and would undoubtedly have been liquidated by them if not for the prominence and prestige of his position.

In August 1943 Pius XII received a plea from the World Jewish Congress to try to persuade the Italian authorities to remove 20,000 Jewish refugees from internment camps in Northern Italy. "Our terror-stricken brethren look to Your Holiness as the only hope for saving them from persecution and death" they wrote. In September 1943, A.L. Easterman on behalf of the WJC reported to the Apostolic Delegate in London (there was no Nuncio since the British government always refused to recognize the diplomatic rights of the Holy See—a hangover from our anti-

Catholic past). He reported that the efforts of the Holy See on behalf of the Jews had been successful and wrote, "I feel sure that the efforts of your Grace, and of the Holy See have brought about this fortunate result, and I should like to express to the Holy See and yourself the warmest thanks of the World Jewish Congress."

Around the same time, the German Chief of Police in Rome threatened to send some 200 Jews to the Russian front unless they produced within 36 hours 50 kg of gold or equivalent in currency. The Chief Rabbi approached the Holy See which

immediately placed 15 kg at his disposal and lent the necessary money free of charge. More than half the Jews of Rome were sheltered in ecclesiastical buildings opened on the express instructions of Pius XII himself. The Vatican Secretariat of State saved more Jews by faking their baptisms and sending lists of "baptized" Jews to the German Ambassador, Weizsacker, so that they could be evacuated. Many of those saved were helped to escape by the massive over-issuing of Vatican passports, particularly in the latter half of 1944, and records exist of many of these. However, this had to be handled with little or no ordinary documentary evidence since the Nazis would without doubt have crushed this means of escape immediately if they had become aware of the extent to which it was being used to facilitate the rescue of Jews.

In November, 1943 Chief Rabbi Herzog wrote to Cardinal Roncalli, the future Pope John XXIII, then Apostolic Delegate for Turkey and Greece, saying: "I take this opportunity to express to your Eminence my sincere thanks as well as my deep appreciation of your very kindly attitude to Israel and of the invaluable help given by the Catholic Church to the Jewish people in its affliction. Would you please convey these sentiments which come from Sion, to His Holiness the Pope (Pius XII) along with the assurances that the people of Israel know how to value his assistance and his attitude." The American Jewish Welfare Board wrote to Pius XII in July 1944 to express its appreciation for the protection given to the Jews during the German occupation of Italy. At the end of the war, the World Jewish Congress expressed its gratitude to the Pope and gave 20 million Lire to Vatican charities. A former Israeli diplomat in Italy claimed that: "The Catholic Church saved more Jewish lives during the war than all the other Churches, religious institutions and rescue organizations put together. Its record stands in startling contrast to the achievements of the International Red Cross and the Western Democracies."

The Pope protested particularly against the deportations of Jews in Slovakia, Hungary and Vichy, France, since these were formerly Catholic countries where Fascists had gained control and they still had a majority of Catholic citizens. In Hungary the Nunciature used thousands of blank and forged forms to help Jews escape. A Red Cross worker even complained that the use of forged documents was against the Geneva Convention! Happily this rather officious complaint did not prevent the Nuncio's covert operation continuing.

Pope Pius XII knew Germany well, having previously been papal Nuncio there. It was he himself who wrote (after reading the first draft by Cardinal Faulhaber of Munich) the criticism of racial policies in the Encyclical *Mit Brennender Sorge* (which means "with burning anxiety" i.e. about the Nazi threat to racial minorities and specifically the Jews) addressed directly to the German people during the pontificate of Pope Pius XI. He wrote that Catholics must never be anti-Semitic because "we are all Semites spiritually" and ought to hold the Jewish people in high regard accordingly.

As a matter of simple historical fact, Rabbi Israel Zolli, the Chief Rabbi of Rome, was received into the Catholic Church in 1945 after the war was over. He was baptized entirely of his own free will and asked Pius XII, with whom he had worked closely in the saving of Jewish lives, to be his godfather. Dr. Zolli chose the name Eugenio as his baptismal name precisely because it was Pius XII's own name.

These facts are rarely mentioned by commentators, yet they are clearly vital to any assessment of the reputation of Pius XII. Instead an insidious campaign has been maintained against the good name of that Pope, largely centering around the accusation that he kept silent during the war about the plight of the Jews and refused to mention them by name. It is now generally implied by some that this was so because he was racist and an anti-Semite. It is difficult to conceive of a more detestable lie.

Pius XII, as Cardinal Pacelli, had a hand in writing the encyclical *Non Abbiamo Bisogno* which condemned Italian Fascist doctrines, as well as *Divini Redemptoris* which opposed Soviet Communism and the massacres and starvation that were being perpetrated in its name in Russia (e.g. the 10 million peasants starved to death in the Ukraine). Pius XII was a highly active, energetic and zealous opponent of totalitarianism and oppression. Pope Pius XI issued the encyclical letter *Mit Brennender Sorge* in 1937 because he was the ruling Pope; but it was Cardinal Pacelli, later Pius XII, who wrote it. The German Roman Catholic hierarchy thanked Pope XI for the letter, which condemned racism and anti-Semitism roundly, and the Pope pointed to Cardinal Pacelli saying it was he who had been responsible for it. Pius XII's first encyclical in 1939, *Summi Pontificatus*, repeated the theme and the Gestapo were immediately given orders by the Nazi leadership to prevent its distribution.

Thereafter, Pius XII adopted his policy of not naming the Jews explicitly. This was partly because his experience of the diplomatic "deafness" of the Allied governments and partly because of his knowledge and experience of the increased persecution of Jews which followed the condemnatory statements made in the two mentioned encyclicals.

He devoted himself instead to the covert rescue operation to save Jewish lives, which was probably the most successful of all those attempted particularly if one takes into account the saving of the Hungarian Jews and the joint actions of the Vatican and the papal Nuncio in Hungary at that time. It is well recognized that the saviors of the Hungarian Jews were the papal Nuncio and the Swedish Embassy (in the person of Raoul Wallenberg), both seeking to outwit the Chief Nazi murderer, Adolf Eichmann.

Pius XII followed the Dutch Roman Catholic hierarchy's plan to name the Jews explicitly in their condemnation of Nazi deportations and intended to issue a similar statement

himself. The Nazis threatened to arrest more Jews. The Dutch Reformed Church agreed not to protest openly but the Roman Catholic hierarchy issued, in May 1943, their famous protest against the deportations. The Nazis then launched an all-out offensive against Jews (except those who had converted to the Dutch Protestant Reformed Church). Ironically, it was the Dutch hierarchy's letter of open condemnation which led to the arrest and execution of Edith Stein, the Jewish Roman Catholic nun and philosopher.

The news of the increased persecution reached Pius XII. His own protest was due to go into *L'Osservatore Romano* that very evening but he had the draft burnt saying "If the protest of the Dutch Bishops has cost the lives of 40,000 people, my intervention would take at least 200,000 people to their deaths." (See *II Settimanale*, 1 March 1975, p.40.) Such was the result of openly naming the Jews; more death from vain gestures.

There is no doubt that if Pius XII had made such a vain gesture, instead of saving more Jewish lives, he would then have been open to the criticism of having made the situation worse by vain and inopportune public statements. Those who now criticize him for not saying enough would then have attacked him for saying too much.

It is easy to forget that there was only so much that the Pope could do. He had no Army or police beyond the Swiss Guard and he was not listened to by the Allied powers. Under constant surveillance and threats from the Nazis when they occupied Rome, his statements were seized and destroyed by the Gestapo. As for his influence with loyal Roman Catholics, he had already spelt out precisely and forthrightly what his views and those of the Church were in the two above-mentioned encyclicals and in constant re-affirmations of his position in the Vatican newspaper *L'Osservatore*. No loyal Roman Catholic need have been in any doubt at the time what the Catholic Church's views on Nazism and racism were. The fact that some

bad Catholics allowed themselves to become involved with the Nazi terror cannot be blamed on Pope Pius XII—any more than the fact that there were Jewish Kapos and a Jewish police helping the Nazis enforce their extermination policies can be blamed upon Jewish religious leaders. Pius XII plainly repudiated the perverted doctrines of the Nazis and also the immoral Fascist doctrines of Benito Mussolini (which had been condemned in the encyclical *Non Abbiamo Bisogno* meaning “we have no need” i.e. of Fascist doctrines).

He is also sometimes criticized for not excommunicating Hitler, but Hitler was already excommunicated *ipso facto* for a whole range of crimes and could only have returned to the Catholic faith, even assuming that he would ever have wanted to, by having his excommunication lifted by the Pope himself. The lifting of the sentence was reserved to the Holy See, *latae sententiae*. Besides, the complaint assumes that Hitler took some notice of the Holy See and the Catholic Church. Insofar as he did, it was for purely political reasons, since he was forced to recognize the influence of the Catholic Church and the papacy. Hitler described himself as “a complete pagan” (see *Hitler's Table Talk*) and regarded the Catholic Church as his greatest enemy, which he would destroy when he had the opportunity.

One must remember, too, that the Pope had a duty to his own flock, who were in equal danger if they spoke out against the Nazis. Prince Sapicha, the Cardinal of Cracow in Poland, told the Pope, perfectly accurately, that if there were open public denunciations Catholics and Jews would be massacred in Poland. It was better to try and rescue as many as possible through the religious houses and allow the opposition Army to build up (which it did — the *Armija Krajowa*, the secret underground Army under General Bor-Komorowski which was later betrayed by the Soviets and massacred by the Nazis). In 1940, 800 priests died in Buchenwald, 1,200 in 1942 and 3,000 in 1943. And that was just Buchenwald.

Later, after the war was over, Pius XII received a large delegation of Roman Jews in the Vatican and ordered that the Imperial steps be opened for them to enter by. These steps were usually reserved for crowned Heads of State (although they were later opened once for President Charles de Gaulle). The Pope received them in the Sistine chapel and, seeing that his Jewish visitors felt uncomfortable in that place, he came down from his throne and warmly welcomed them telling them to feel completely at home, saying "I am only the Vicar of Christ but you are His very kith and kin". Such was his great love for the Jewish people, augmented by his knowledge of their terrible sufferings.

Oskar Schindler, a Roman Catholic, is regarded as a "righteous gentile" by many Jews for saving the lives of some 3,000 – 4,000 Jews in his factories. Why then is Pope Pius XII so unjustly criticized, despite saving 800,000 Jewish lives?

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PARODY OF MADONNA OFFENDS CATHOLICS

Cathy Crimmins has written a book, *Madonna & Child*, that is celebrated as a parody of the pop star, Madonna. In it, she manages to offend Catholics in many ways. Here is a selection of her comments:

Madonna on the Virgin Mary as role model: "She's the ultimate single mother. I'll only be happy if my kid's birthday becomes a national holiday, too."

Madonna on the best cure for morning sickness: "Communion wafers. Wash 'em down with San Pelligrino or Evian—they're just the thing to keep your stomach stable until you grow out of your nausea and all the garments in your closet."

Madonna on choosing a priest to be her sperm donor: "Tempting. I do like a virgin, and I do want to raise my child to be a good Catholic. But most priests are gay, anyway, right?"

The Catholic League released the following comment to the press about the book:

"It is one thing for Cathy Crimmins to boast about Madonna's moral depravity, quite another to slam Catholicism. It is not being flip to make derisive comments about Our Blessed Mother, the Eucharist or priests: it is downright irresponsible and inexcusable.

"It is important to note that two of the most scurrilous remarks about Catholicism are printed on the back cover of the book. When combined with the title of the volume and the picture of Madonna posed as Our Blessed Lady (with child), it is clear that the intent was to offend. Labeling this trash a 'parody' may satisfy some, but it will not prove persuasive to anyone with even an ounce of discernment."

MARTHA STEWART SHOWS CLASS

In our September issue, we ran a story about the book by Tom Connor and Jim Downey, *Martha Stuart's Better Than You at Entertaining*. The book was featured as a parody of the work of stylist, Martha Stewart. It also featured several anti-Catholic pictures and commentaries.

Reading the last page of the book led us to believe that the book had the blessings of the real Martha Stewart. But we were wrong. The league was contacted by Allyn Magrino, publicist for Martha Stewart, asking that we clear Stewart's name. We asked for a statement from Martha Stewart and promised to publish it in *Catalyst*. It is printed below:

"Neither I nor anyone on the staff of Martha Stewart Living (including stylists, photographers, writers, editors) worked on the concept, production, or publishing of the parody *Martha Stuart's Better Than You at Entertaining*. I did not lend my name to this project, was not consulted regarding its content, nor was I advised in advance that it was being developed in a second year in a row.

I have never ridiculed Catholicism or any religion in my books, weekly television show, monthly magazine or Christmas special. My office is very active working with charities of all denominations and contributing to the community in which we work and throughout the United States and Canada.

My books are published by Random House, Clarkson Potter/Crown and Oxmoor House, Inc. and Leisure Arts. I do not work with HarperCollins Publishers, Inc. which published the parody.

I apologize for the obvious concern this matter has caused *Catalyst* readers, but I have no control over what is written about me or parodies done regarding my work."

We are grateful to Martha Stewart for this clarification and regret misidentifying her with the parody. We conveyed our apologies to her through her publicist.

TOWNIES SHOWS ITS AGENDA

In the last edition of *Catalyst*, the league warned about the ABC show *Townies* which was supposed to introduce a character named Father Boyle. Based on information in *TV Guide*, the league worried about a disrespectful treatment of Catholicism. Our fears were only too well founded.

Carrie and her friend Kurt are fallen away Catholics, whom Father Boyle would like to see return to the Church. However, on the October 23 episode he was more interested in fundraising to replace a statue. He wanted funds from a rich older woman who left the Church when her cat died. Carrie said sometimes people blame God. The priest responded, "Actually she blamed me. I backed over the damned thing on bingo night." As for the Our Lady of Grace statue with rusted arms, the priest said to her that she would not want children having to be hospitalized with tetanus "because they cut themselves on Our Lady's jagged rusty stumps."

Carrie was confused about what to do and saw an image of Jesus in mashed potatoes. Kurt said to her, "This isn't religion. It's voodoo. It's not even voodoo; it's insanity." He put a knife in the potatoes and said that it was Frosty the Snowman. "We're not slaves to some mindless superstition," Kurt said. When his change from his bill at the restaurant was \$6.66, he agreed to go with Carrie to visit the rich old lady.

Carrie talked to the woman about the statue. The woman said, "That cat murdering priest has been hounding me for weeks." The woman gave her money, thinking she was another girl, Flora. Carrie pretended to take money but felt guilty and left it with the old lady. She went to the church to tell Fr. Boyle. He was in the confessional and she was standing outside. He tried to coax her into the confessional by saying it was comfortable and that he could not hear her as well outside. She explained what she did about the money, asserting

it was what God wanted. She said that she hoped she had not disappointed the priest. Fr. Boyle responded, "I have oreos," as if he did not care about what she said.

As usual, Hollywood is pushing the message that one can believe in God and be a good person without being a churchgoer. Carrie was shown as a good person while the priest was preoccupied with money and guilt.

If *Townies* proceeds like this, we will be in for another battle. We'll keep you posted.

THE LAST SUPPER, WITHOUT CROWN OF THORNS

Readers will recall that when the Catholic League protested the use of a crown of thorns in an ad for the movie, *The Last Supper*, the crown was removed by Columbia Tristar Home Video, a subsidiary of Sony Pictures Entertainment Company. But much to our dismay, when the movie showed up in video stores, the crown of thorns was again back in place, this time appearing on the jacket of the video (it surrounded a tomato with flames emanating from the center, making comparisons with the Sacred Heart evident).

Again, the league protested, and again we won. Here is a selection from the letter that was sent to us by E. Fritz Friedman, vice president, Worldwide Publicity, for Columbia Tristar Home Video:

"Please be assured that the offending artwork was used in error and was placed on only a limited number of ads. Upon receipt of your letter we took immediate action to correct

the matter. All art has been modified and the crown of thorns has been removed from the tomato. The corrected art is now being used and, to the extent it is within our control, will continue to be used for all future ads and promotions of the film."

The Catholic League has no reason to doubt the sincerity of Mr. Friedman and trusts that this will finally be the last time we deal with this issue.

HOLLYWOOD OFFENDS AGAIN

In the movie *Glimmer Man*, Catholic symbols are shown in an unnecessarily brutal and violent manner. The story starts with a serial killer on the loose who murders and then crucifies couples, predominantly Catholic, because he believes he is redeeming them, as ordered by Jesus. Not only are the crucifixions depicted graphically, the idea that Catholicism is involved with the derangement of the perpetrator is played out.

The drawings that accompany the murders indicate who the criminal is and he has a confrontation with the film's hero, who is a policeman played by Steven Seagal. He has a showdown with the ardent Catholic sociopath in a Catholic church. The criminal holds a priest hostage on the altar to keep Seagal away. Eventually Seagal has to shoot the killer after he threatens suicide and then threatens him as well.

What makes this all the more offensive is that this is not necessary to the real story in the movie. Some criminal elements are using the serial killings as a cover for their crimes. So they start to use the same mode of killing to

eliminate their enemies with blame accruing to the serial killer. It was another instance of gratuitous mockery and degradation of Catholic symbols and beliefs.

BIASED REPORTING ON 20/20

ABC's *20/20* on October 25 used loaded language to describe a series of adoptions in Ireland over a thirty year period which separated unwed mothers and their babies. Whatever the shortcomings of the plan, the various commentators on the program made it clear that they believed the Catholic Church was culpable.

In the preview at the beginning of the show the voice-over said: "Tonight a revelation that shocked a nation. The Catholic Church and a cold-hearted plan. Babies—thousands of them taken from their mothers' arms. Shipped across the sea for adoption in America." Images shown included that of a statue of the Virgin Mary and stained glass windows. The voice-over continued, "They were young mothers, unwed, judged, at the mercy of the Church." Finally, "Tom Jarriel in a *20/20* classic, the story of a very different time, a powerful Church, desperate young women, and a heartless act in the name of God."

Hugh Downs helped introduce the story, calling what happened a "heartless plan" which involved "one of the most powerful organizations in the world—the Catholic Church." He elaborated, "It's the story of young women who broke the rules of their Church and their society and paid a cruel price." Then Barbara Walters added, "They were unwed mothers, judged and ostracized, forced to turn to the Catholic Church for help. What happened to them as a result may now seem beyond

comprehension.”

Tom Jarriel was the reporter. He used phrases like “shameful deeds of honorable men” and “merciful Church showing no mercy.” Stained glass windows were shown during the voice-over. He discussed the “displacement of a generation of children through the intimidation of their mothers.” He explained that to be unwed and pregnant involved a “social stigma [which] was enormous...the Catholic Church branded them as sinners.” They had to go to Church-supported homes and give up the baby.

The Irish government “surrendered its responsibility to the Church.” From the 1940s to the 1970s adoptions of this secretive nature involved about 2000 children. Guidelines for the adoption were recently found. Among the provisions were that “only Catholic couples could adopt” and that children must be raised Catholic. The highest ranking Irish Catholic official said at the time that it was important to have no publicity.

A priest was shown as spokesman for the Church. He argued that one cannot fairly judge a policy implemented in the 1940s by the standard of 1996. But Jarriel did not agree, choosing instead to take a more accusatory stance.

The Catholic League does not object to straight reporting that has the effect of embarrassing the Church. It does object to tendentiously conceived and executed reports that wrench out of historical context episodes in the Church’s history. It is for this reason that we conveyed our objections to ABC.