

# 75 ORGANIZATIONS ASKED TO JOIN SHOWTIME BOYCOTT

The Catholic League has asked 75 Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, Mormon and Buddhist organizations to join us in boycotting Showtime. The boycott is being called because of our dissatisfaction with VIACOM CEO Sumner Redstone's refusal to condemn the Catholic bashing associated with the Showtime film, "Sister Mary Explains It All." It aired Sunday evening.

Catholic League president William Donohue issued the following remarks today:

"In March, 1995 the Catholic League was the first organization in the nation to call for a boycott of Disney. We did so because of the anti-Catholic Disney/Miramax film, 'Priest.' We had no illusions of taking down this Goliath but I said at the time that it was our goal to 'blacken up Disney's Snow White image.' This, I believe, was accomplished and in subsequent years Disney was boycotted, for a variety of reasons, by several other organizations. I think it is fair to say that Disney has taken positive measures to improve its reputation in the last six years.

"In 1996-1997, we were the first organization in the nation to successfully use the internet to call for a boycott of a television show's sponsors: by posting the names of the sponsors of each week's ABC-TV show 'Nothing Sacred,' we made it possible to crush the program. We did just that. And in 1999, we got Disney to put the arm on Miramax by dropping the film, 'Dogma'; it was released by an independent film organization.

"We have posted the appeal for the boycott on our website, [www.catholicleague.org](http://www.catholicleague.org), and are now asking 75 organizations to join with us in this effort. While no one denies Showtime the

right to insult Catholics, it is also true that the Catholic League will not be denied the right to exercise its First Amendment right in calling for a boycott. They asked for this fight, now let's see if they can take the heat."

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## BOYCOTT OF SHOWTIME LAUNCHED

In the May 14 edition of *Variety*, the Catholic League ran a full-page ad requesting VIACOM chief Sumner Redstone to condemn the Catholic-bashing film, "Sister Mary Explains It All"; it is scheduled to air on Showtime on May 27. We subsequently issued news releases objecting to the movie and to the anti-Catholic comments made by the film's director, Marshall Brickman, Showtime CEO Matt Blank and actress Diane Keaton (she plays the malicious nun). On May 15 and May 17, Catholic League president William Donohue wrote to Sumner Redstone asking him to condemn the Catholic bashing associated with the movie.

Showtime released the following statement today: "This does not reflect the opinion of Showtime or VIACOM. 'Sister Mary Explains It All' is an award winning play that is clearly a satire. Both Showtime and VIACOM reject intolerance in all its forms." William Donohue responded as follows:

"To say that it 'does not reflect the opinion of Showtime or VIACOM' to air this movie is to lie: this is not a film that has been previously released—it is a Showtime original based on the viciously anti-Catholic play 'Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All for You.' Moreover, it fails to persuade to say that the movie is based on 'an award winning play.' The racist movie, 'The Birth of a Nation,' was named by the American Film Institute as one of America's 100 greatest

films. But Showtime would never insult African Americans by airing this 'award winning' movie. As for the bit about the movie being a 'satire,' if this were true then somebody needs to explain why the ADL, the American Jewish Committee and the National Conference of Christians and Jews blasted the play for its bigotry. And to say that 'Showtime and VIACOM reject intolerance in all its forms' is also a lie: Brickman and Blank recently cited their Jewishness as reason why it is okay to dump on Catholics.

"We are launching a boycott of Showtime and will ask our allies in various activist organizations to join with us. Redstone is a fraud."

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## **SHOWTIME JUSTIFIES CATHOLIC BASHING**

Matt Blank, Showtime's CEO, and Marshall Brickman, the director of the May 27 Showtime movie, "Sister Mary Explains It All," have justified this anti-Catholic film by citing their Jewishness. The Catholic League has a full-page ad in the current weekly edition of *Variety* asking the head of Showtime's parent company, Viacom CEO Sumner Redstone, to publicly condemn the movie. In the ad, Brickman is quoted as justifying the Catholic-bashing nature of the film by referencing—and distorting—past episodes of the Church's history.

Catholic League president William Donohue addressed this issue today:

"If I were an entertainment executive responsible for a notoriously anti-Semitic movie, and I expressly gave myself a

pass by citing my Catholicism, every Jewish civil rights organization would be coming down my throat. Justifiably so. That is why the Catholic League is so upset with this latest outrageous development attendant to Showtime's film version of the maliciously anti-Catholic play, 'Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All for You.'

"Columnist Cindy Adams reports in today's *New York Post* that Showtime CEO Matt Blank said of the movie, 'Listen, I'm Jewish. We're into projects that are too political, too religious, too black, too gay. We're a home for wayward movies.' Marshall Brickman, the film's director, is quoted as saying, 'Listen, I'm Jewish. I reserve the right to satirize any minority.'

"Well, guys—Listen, I'm Catholic. And I don't believe that anyone can exculpate himself from bigotry by citing his racial, ethnic or religious roots. In short, you owe Catholics an apology for both your bigoted words and bigoted deeds. We will now ask Sumner Redstone for a second time to condemn all the Catholic bashing that is associated with this production. We will not let go of this issue, especially now that Blank and Brickman have decided to play dirty."

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## **VARIETY AD MAKES APPEAL TO VIACOM'S SUMNER REDSTONE**

The May 14 edition of the weekly *Variety* carries a full-page ad (p.13) by the Catholic League asking Viacom chairman Sumner Redstone to condemn an upcoming anti-Catholic movie on Showtime; Viacom owns Showtime. On May 27, Showtime will air a film version of one of the most anti-Catholic plays ever

written, "Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All for You."

The *Variety* ad, written by Catholic League president William Donohue, describes how malicious the play is. He cites several Jewish and interreligious organizations that condemned the play in the 1980s and quotes several theater critics who also ripped the play for its bigotry. Donohue then targets the film's lead actor and director:

"Even worse are the comments made by Diane Keaton, who plays Sister Mary Ignatius in the Showtime movie, and Marshall Brickman, the director. On January 17, 2001, Keaton said of her character, 'Sister Mary is basically living in hell because of what she believes.' Brickman went further, justifying the attack on Catholicism by exclaiming, 'any institution that backed the Inquisition, the Crusades and the Roman position on the Holocaust deserves to be the butt of a couple of jokes.'"

Donohue then asks, "Well, Mr. Redstone, with whom do you stand? With those civil rights organizations and theater critics who have blasted the play for its Catholic bashing? Or with Mr. Brickman who says we Catholics deserve it?" Donohue notes that Mr. Redstone has been recognized for his opposition to anti-Semitism and bigotry in general.

Donohue concedes that Mr. Redstone is not personally responsible "for this cruel commentary." But it did occur on his watch, and that is why the appeal is being made. The ad ends by saying to the Viacom chairman that "we Catholics want to know whether you will join with us—and with people across faith lines—in condemning 'Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All for You.'"