

WFOR TV, MIAMI, AIRS "NEWS" STORY ON CONFESSION

On May 16, the CBS affiliate in Miami, WFOR TV, featured a story on its late-night news that depicted the Catholic Sacrament of Reconciliation in a most questionable way. All throughout the movie that preceded it, "Joan of Arc," promotions for this "news story" were flagged.

The news segment informed viewers that many Catholics practice their faith in different ways and that some Catholics are choosing not to confess their sins to a priest. Confession scenes from the movies "Moonstruck" and "Mortal Sins" were shown, thus adding to the triviality of the report. If there was one statement made by the commentators that summed up the tenor of the report, it was this: "The fact is many Catholics never go to confession. They simply don't feel comfortable confessing their innermost thoughts to a priest. Yet these same people consider themselves to be good Catholics." The closing comment by one of the reporters was a musing, "Very interesting."

Catholic League president William Donohue remarked as follows:

"The real news about the WFOR news clip on confession was that there was no news in it at all. This begs the question, Why was it run? By flagging it during the two-hour movie, 'Joan of Arc,' the station hoped to lure the expected Catholic audience to tune in and learn what all the controversy was about. This kind of baiting is more appropriately the stuff of tabloid journalism, not serious news reporting.

"The point of this piece was to create controversy where none exists: Catholics either go to confession or they do not—what they don't do is sit around and moan about it. And, of course, we have the forced symmetry that is so popular with some

segments of the media, namely the strategy that puts Catholics who reject Church teachings on the same ground as Catholics who are loyal to the Church. This smacks of an agenda—not an honest inquiry.”