

Catholic TV Office Lauds 'Flying Nun' Series



Sally Field is an earth bound "Flying Nun" while teaching pupils in an episode from the new TV series. The series previews Sept. 7 (7:30 p.m. EDT). NCORT predicted that it will be a season standout.

The executive director of the National Catholic Office for Radio and Television has predicted that "The Flying Nun" will be "one of the standout success stories of the coming TV season" from both a commercial and religious viewpoint.

He also revealed that NCORT is serving as technical advisor for the comedy series about a novice who discovers that she can fly, whenever the wind is right.

The NCORT head, Charles E. Reilly, Jr., made known the TV office's opinion on the series and NCORT's connection with it in hopes of dispelling fears that the flying nun format would prove embarrassing and insulting to Catholic viewers.

The half-hour ABC-TV series, which will have a full-hour premiere Thursday, Sept. 7 (7:30 p.m. EDT), stars Sally Field — formerly TV's "Gidget" — as Sister Bertille, who finds that the combination of her light weight, her wing-shaped headpiece and a strong wind gets her off the ground and into one comical situation after another.

Referring to early attempts to bring down "The Flying Nun" — the Q-and-A columnist for "Our Sunday Visitor" for instance, wrote off the series as "stupid" — Mr. Reilly commented in an interview:

"The 'flying' bit is a gimmick, but it's an attractive gimmick,

and it's an extremely well-produced series, well-written. But it's a mistake to assume that this is just a 'gimmick' series. The gimmick is not going to prevent viewers from becoming aware of the deeper messages in the series, the basic religious setting, the basic ethic they are trying to get across; there are going to be certain rights and wrongs pointed out.

"This is a refreshingly different series that is going to be getting across a message very effectively to a large audience that is not exposed to religious TV programming the rest of the week."

Reilly noted that "The Flying Nun" is the first primetime TV series to request assistance from NCORT—an agency established by the U.S. bishops in late 1965 to assist in the improvement of religious programming and to serve as a liaison between the U.S. Catholic Church and the television industry.

"The producers of the series, Screen Gems, came to us for assistance, we did not go to them," Reilly stressed.

NCORT to date has seen the premiere episode and 10 scripts. "One of our two over-riding considerations is that what is depicted, as far as the Catholic Church is concerned, is accurate," Reilly said. "We have probably given them 30 technical points already; little things like: you don't refer to the Car-

dinal of Puerto Rico (the series is set in San Juan), because

Puerto Rico doesn't have a Cardinal."

The other consideration, he said, was taste, but except for calling attention to unwitting double entendres and gaffes that might prove offensive, "we're leaving the good taste thing to them. There's increasing advertiser interest in the series and they're not about to get the Catholic population upset about it."

Reilly preferred to stress what he considers to be the series' potential value, both in encouraging more prime-time religious programming, and in the influence "The Flying Nun" might have on young viewers.

Attraction for Young Viewers

"This is going to attract a lot of young viewers, either because of the 'flying' gimmick or because of Sally Field," Reilly said, "and what this series will show them is that today's nuns are 'with it,' that they're not hiding out in a garret.

"Let's face it: every parochial school kid in the country is going to watch it, and the nuns are going to have to start watching it, because these kids are going to be coming in with

questions the next day. Sure, some nuns are going to write letters saying 'this is not how it is,' but most nuns are going to be pleased with it. They're going to see nuns being portrayed as human beings."

Even without the 'flying' gimmick, Reilly said, "this has got series on TV this season, and I'm saying that not because it's a 'Catholic' series but because of what I've seen of it so far, and because of what I know about the production talent behind it."

Ironically, NCORT has been encouraging Screen-Gems—to make the series "more ecumenical," Reilly said. One specific suggestion made by NCORT is that perhaps Sister Bertille might become involved in an episode with a rabbi, in the course of which he would show her through his synagogue.

"There's never been in prime time a description of a synagogue for a broad non-Jewish audience," Reilly noted. "We feel that if there's any good to be done in prime-time TV, as far as religious programming is concerned, it has to be done ecumenically." —(Catholic Press Features)

Pittsburgh Pioneers

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ed by a sub-professional teacher aide.

It had become evident during the past three summers that in addition to youngsters who needed remedial assistance, there was a critical need for a program to assist students who were economically, culturally and socially disadvantaged, but who had better than average ability. It was also known that the majority of these youngsters were in the age of early adolescence. Therefore, we operated a special program to stimulate the educational interests of these youngsters and open up for them new opportunities. Ninety-eight students participated.

One of the conditions for selection was that the youngster be in the upper two-fifths of his class and that he be capable of achieving the desired results. The majority of these students were drawn from the inner city, but in order to achieve a better socio-economic and racial balance, some of the participants were educationally advanced youngsters from suburbia.

Science, Math Stressed

The emphasis was on science and mathematics. Group instruction with sophisticated equipment was provided, with opportunity for individual instruction and research. Because a well rounded program is essential, courses in the fine arts, literature and social studies were included. Each Friday was devoted

to cultural experiences. The group was addressed by visiting lecturers and made visits to art galleries, museums, light operas and industries. Bus passes were provided and mid-morning snacks were given, so that there might be no cost to the students.

Problems created by poverty are well-known. People living in depressed areas are denied the opportunities necessary for normal development. Poverty creates a depressing atmosphere, sense of despair, feeling of inadequacy and frustration.

This is especially true for young people. Youngsters witnessing the frustration of others often adopt attitudes and habits which lead to the same dismal existence. Both today's and tomorrow's generations need and deserve a chance to overcome the frustration and dire consequences generated by poverty.

The results continue to amaze us.

Synod Approves State Aid

Saginaw, Mich. — (RNS) — Government aid to parochial schools received qualified approval from the conservative Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod in a cautiously-worded resolution adopted at its biennial meeting here.

The resolution said that such government assistance was neither condemned nor commanded by the Bible and that individual congregations may decide for themselves whether to accept federal or state aid for certain educational programs.

It observed that there is a "wide realm of contacts in church and state relations that are not in themselves necessarily a confusion of church and state," and that "actions and decisions in this realm call for very cautious and discerning judgment."

The Synod urged parochial schools to reject any offer of aid which brought with it improper government control or that undermined the Christian's own responsibility to provide support for church programs.

Apartheid

Critics Praised

Vatican City — (RNS) — A statement broadcast by the Vatican Radio praised the Catholic students of South Africa for expressing "firm condemnation of all racial discrimination" at a meeting in Grahamstown, South Africa.

Catholic, Public Colleges Linked

Saginaw, Mich. — (NC) — A study of establishment of a privately supported Catholic college on the campus of Saginaw Valley College has been launched here by the Saginaw diocese.

Auxiliary Bishop James A. Hickey of Saginaw has appointed members of seven committees to carry out the study and has expressed the hope they will complete their work by the end of September.

A similar study also has been undertaken by the Michigan Lutheran Churches, Missouri Synod, to determine if a Lutheran college should be established on the campus. The Saginaw Valley College is located between Bay City and Saginaw.

Bishop Hickey said if the committees report favorably and a decision to proceed is reached, it will mark a new era of development in cooperation between public-private education in this country.

The bishop said such programs have been carried out in Canada, but added he has found no parallel for such an arrangement in this country.

The students will be eligible for Saginaw Valley College athletics, will be able to use the college library and participate equally in all student activities. Officials of the college have said the plan meets constitutional provisions regarding the separation of church and state.

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