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'Soap'... Besides That, It's Dull, Humorless

By PAT COSTA

Unmitigated sex may not be the worst thing about the new ABC situation comedy, "Soap," which made its debut this week.

More objectionable for some viewers may be the fact that "Soap" is dull, plodding and humorless. In short, it's a bore.

Taking the invitation of Channel 13's program director Jerry Carr to "come see 'Soap' anytime" I previewed two episodes recently in order to write this column at the same time the general public would be viewing it.

The first episode, Carr

explained, had been edited and toned down (presumably after sponsors began backing away and some ABC affiliates refused to carry the series). What Carr had on hand was the original unedited film. I blanched several times (imagining the effect on kids should their parents be away or other wise engaged) as an aging mother and then her young daughter both have a go with a tennis pro. (The rhyme was unintentional.) I was assured that that particular scene, both language and action, had been cleaned up.

I found several other incidents offensive and decided that many viewers

Turn it off, please. An editorial, Page 4.

are not "adult" enough (or the reverse) to enjoy this kind of heavy-handed tripe, parody or no. I found little of merit. Scenes between Bill Crystal, who plays the homosexual son, and Catherine Damon, cast as his mother, showed acting skills and good timing but that's akin to saying the roast beef was spoiled but the mustard was fine.

As for the homosexual portrayal, I found Crystal's posturing far less offensive, say, than scenes in which a 14-year-old boy is reading

porn magazines and wishing he were old enough "to touch."

Crystal manages to convey the impression that he is putting the audience on as well as his TV family. He is a talented comedian as is Miss Damon and I hope they find vehicles worthy of their abilities. Watching the rest of the shows proved to be tedious.

Plotting was non-existent and dialogue amateurish and adolescent. To those who say that "Soap" does not cover any ground that soap operas and other prime time sit-coms such as "All in the Family" and "Maude"

have already exploited, it is important to point out that the pervading tone is substantially different in this story about two sisters and their families.

Not only is sex the one ingredient in this bad stew but the overall attitude reflects a debasement of humanity in general, a fact which should offend parents more than individual, explicit, sex-filled scenes. Not content with this general insult, the series also manages to take extra potshots at blacks, Italians, Hawaiians, Germans, Homosexuals, etc. etc.

Various church groups, including the United States

Catholic Conference, have requested that viewers watch and then send their reactions to local stations and the ABC network.

The 9:30 p.m. viewing time particularly bothers me since youngsters in their pre-teens and early teens who are most likely to be impressed with this distorted view of sex among adults are still watching.

One church spokesman has already pointed out that if ABC wants to bill "Soap" as an adult comedy, it should screen it opposite Johnny Carson I agree. "Soap" might be just the soporific a nation of insomniacs is looking for.

Diocese Notes 'Great Malaise' In GEM

By JOHN DASH

That year-long honeymoon cruise for the diocese and Genesee Ecumenical Ministries (GEM) is headed into shallow waters.

The word is out that the workings of the new "covenant" signed a year ago last May are generating a rift rather than a reunion, the seriousness of which will be aired at a special meeting of the GEM members on Saturday at Asbury First Methodist Church.

"We feel a great malaise with the present GEM organization, and feel that certain critical philosophical and operational questions must be resolved in order that the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester can participate in more than a token way in the GEM process," Bishop Joseph L. Hogan wrote last May 18 to Rev. Lawrence Witmer, GEM's operational head.

"When the Catholic Diocese entered into the covenant," he said, "with the other communions, it was our understanding that GEM would indeed be a process rather than an

organization. We understood that GEM would be a very lean structure, existing simply as the mechanism through which the mission activities of the communions could be brought into relationship with each other and coordinated and cooperative operating methods be worked out. We did not envision GEM as having programs of itself, separate from the programs of the communions.

"It seems, too, that the Ecumenical Strategy Board (perhaps because of its composition) has not developed into the kind of 'trading center' we understood it would be. Nor are we convinced, as yet, that it gives promise of becoming a forum of effective or practical exchange among the communions."

The Ecumenical Strategy Board (ESB), as the GEM constitution has it, is GEM's governing board. "Its voting membership shall consist of persons qualified as hereinafter set forth, four of whom shall be chosen by the United Church Ministry, and two by each of the

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Columns in the News

Columns are making news in the Courier-Journal this week. It is not often that we print a columnist on Page 1 but in light of the controversy over the television show "Soap" we have printed Pat Costa's "As I See It" up front this week.

But there also is a newcomer to our column ranks. "Juspax," prepared by members of the diocesan Justice and Peace Commission, makes its debut on Page 6 and will appear once a month hereafter. It will be concerned with the question of human rights from a Christian viewpoint.

Another particularly apropos column is "Insights in Liturgy," on Page 6 this week. Father Robert J. Kennedy, diocesan director of liturgy, begins a series on the option of Communion in the Hand and how it will work in this diocese.



Photos by Terrance J. Brennan

Father Hohman and Bishop Hogan share a laugh in a light moment at the Priests Council.

Fr. Hohman Elected

Priests Council OKs Pay Hikes

By JOHN DASH

What some veteran observers of the Priests Council had expected to brew into a storm of debate, breezed easily past last week as the assembly named Father Louis Hohman to be its president for the next two years.

Father Conrad Sundholm was unanimously elected vice president and Father Lewis Brown, also unanimously, was elected secretary.

Father Hohman, whose duties include the pastorate of St. Vincent DePaul parish, the hosting of a radio program, and the role of columnist-episcopal advisor of the Courier-Journal, now assumes the mantle of Father James Marvin, whose term as president of the Priests Council expired last June.

Among his duties as president, Father Hohman will chair meetings of the first consultative body in the diocese, will be the official representative of the diocese to the state organization of priests councils, and will be present at meetings of the Joint Executive Committee, a gathering of heads of the consultative bodies of the diocese.

A second move, a

recommendation to Bishop Joseph L. Hogan that the base salaries of diocesan priests be adjusted to reflect the rise in the cost of living, also was passed without much debate.

In its first meeting of the new season, the priests accepted and presented to Bishop Hogan a report prepared by their own Priests Personnel Finance Committee. The report recommends that the priests' base salaries, established in 1973, and adjusted in 1975, be re-adjusted by Oct. 1 by 17 per cent. This, the committee feels, reflects half of the 34 per cent rise of the cost of living devaluation of the purchasing power of the dollar since the 1975 adjustment.

The target date for a second adjustment was set for June of 1978.

Presenting the group's report was Father Kevin Murphy, who chairs the committee's deliberations. Also on hand to explain the need for the adjustment was Gerald Sass, director of personnel for the Gannett Co. Inc., and a member of the committee.

The report states that the original mandate of the group is to "make annual

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Sunday Human Rights Day

Sunday, Sept. 18, has been designated throughout the diocese by Bishop Joseph L. Hogan and the International Justice and Peace Commission as a Day of Prayer for Human Rights. A special liturgy prepared with the Department of Liturgy will focus on being in solidarity with brothers and sisters around the world who are suffering the loss of their human rights under repressive governments.

The day was suggested by some people who are themselves denied the freedom of their human rights. They believe we are supporting them with our prayers. As Bishop Hogan has stated, "we, as committed Christians, have a responsibility which is identified with the mission of giving witness before our world of the need for love and justice contained in the Gospel message, and is a

witness which must be carried out in our Church institutions and in our own daily lives."

Along with this Day of Prayer, parishes, committees and individuals will have an opportunity to further their concern for human rights in the world by involving themselves with the International Justice and Peace Commission or some other group dealing with this issue. Suggested action plans have been provided to human development committees and pastors.

Any groups or individuals interested in working with the Diocesan International Justice and Peace Commission are asked to call or write to its Human Rights Task Force, 716-328-6400; 750 W. Main St., Rochester, N.Y. 14611.

Bishop Hogan On Rights

September 1977

My dear People:

During the past several months we have heard abundant news about repressive governments in Africa, Eastern Europe, Russia, Southeast Asia, Korea and South America. People have been summarily imprisoned, tortured and even put to death. They have, in short, been denied their human rights.

The 1971 ROMAN SYNOD OF BISHOPS stated: "The Church has received from Christ the mission of preaching the Gospel message, which contains a call to all persons to turn away from sin to the love of the Father, universal brotherhood and a consequent demand for justice in the world. This is the reason why the Church has the right and indeed the duty to proclaim justice on the social, national and international level, and to denounce instances of injustice, when the fundamental rights of people and their salvation demand it."

We know that the Church is not solely responsible for justice in this world. However, we, as committed Christians, have a responsibility and duty to determine how we can perform this ministry of justice. We have

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