

Blackout Urged May 23

New York (RNS) — Morality in Media has called for a national television blackout day on Tuesday, May 23, to protest the networks' plans to increase sex-oriented television programming in the coming season.

It will not be supported by the National Catholic Conference, it was announced in Washington. The NCC said it had not been contacted by Morality in Media.

Families are urged to shut off their TV sets on May 23 and plan special activities for a "family day." Tuesday was selected for the blackout because it proved to be the night with the most

offensive programs in the last season, according to members.

Father Morton A. Hill, national president of MM, said the May 23 blackout will be a preparation for a series of such days, and possibly a week, early in the new TV season.

"A series of TV blackouts could eventually cut into advertising revenues, and this seems to be the only language the networks understand," according to Rabbi Julius G. Neumann, MM chairman.

The 200,000-member Morality in Media said it is asking religious leaders and executives of other

national organizations to participate in the blackout.

The U.S. Catholic Conference Department of Communication, in a report to diocesan communication directors, said the USCC "will not be supporting Morality in Media's venture."

"The reason is quite simple," the USCC said. "Neither MM's board of directors nor its executive staff has requested cooperation from the USCC or otherwise consulted with conference officials. To the best of our knowledge MM has not consulted with other national religious organizations either."



'Annie'

Shelley Bruce, 12, who plays the starring role in the Broadway hit musical, "Annie," gets a big hug from Sister Miriam Weslau at St. Joseph's School, East Rutherford, N.J. The young actress continues attending the school where Benedictine Sisters have been helping her combine school life with Broadway (The Innocents), films (The Godfather, The Marathon Man), television (Love of Life, The Mike Douglas Show) and many commercials. (RNS)

Pope Tells Bishops: Be Faithful to Rules for Penance

Vatican City (RNS) — Pope Paul, in a strongly worded address to a group of Roman Catholic bishops from New York State, urged them and other bishops and priests in America to be faithful to the prescribed ritual and rules of the sacrament of Penance.

The pontiff called for strict observance of the norms for general absolution and insisted that children should make their first confession before receiving their first

Holy Communion. Though the Pope did not indicate why he was singling out these two matters for comment, it was clear that he was alluding to recent instances in the United States and elsewhere when bishops imparted general absolution to large crowds of the faithful, and to a practice in many parishes of giving Communion to children for the first time without requiring them to confess their sins first.

Skokie Catholics Offer Support to 'Jewish Brothers'

Springfield, Ohio (RNS) — A petition of support signed by 80 students and staff at St. Teresa Catholic Junior High School here has been relayed to Jews in the Chicago suburb of Skokie.

"We offer our spiritual and emotional support to the community of Skokie, Ill., during their protests of the Nazi march," the petition said.

"We show this support to

our Jewish brothers and sisters by signing this petition, by wearing the Star of David on Friday, April 21, and by praying for their cause. We hope our actions, however small, may demonstrate our belief in the brotherhood of men under God."

The petition was relayed to Skokie via the National Conference of Christians and Jews office in Chicago.

Chile Issues Amnesty

Santiago, Chile (RNS) — Chile's military government has decreed a general amnesty for political prisoners and Chilean exiles guilty of violating the state-of-siege laws.

The amnesty affects 1,200 persons in exile who were convicted of politically related offenses and 280 persons being held for such violations.

A decree, signed by President Augusto Pinochet and the three other members of the ruling junta, said the amnesty would apply to persons who violated state-of-siege laws between Sept. 11, 1973 and March 10, 1978. The state-of-siege, a form of emergency rule, was lifted March 11 after being in effect more than four years.

The decree said that people sentenced to jail terms by military tribunals before Sept. 11, 1973 — the day of the military coup that overthrew the government of Marxist President Salvador Allende would also be pardoned. Excluded are common criminals convicted of such crimes as murder, fraud, robbery and swindling.

Restrictions, however, continue on political, press, and labor freedoms.

Documentary Wins Honor

New York (RNS) — An ABC television documentary on the Panama Canal produced in cooperation with the U.S. Catholic Conference has won two national awards for excellence in broadcast journalism.

"The Panama Canal — A Test of Conscience" received an award from the Writers Guild of America for outstanding achievement in a television current events documentary.

It also won a George Washington Medal from the Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge for outstanding achievement in bringing about a better understanding of the American way of life.

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