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Is nothing sacred?



Story by staff writer Rob Cullivan • Photo Illustration by Greg Francis and Zoe Maras

When Father Gregory Coiro, OFM Cap, first received a pilot script of the ABC-TV series "Nothing Sacred," he thought the controversial show was so bad, it would never be launched.

"It just seems to me that this series has gone for the sensational," said Father Coiro, director of media relations for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. "Everybody (in the show) is a caricature rather than a character."

Despite the priest's initial impression, however, "Nothing Sacred" premiered Sept. 18, and is slated to continue at 8-9 p.m. Thursdays.

Even before it aired, however, the show had been the center of controversy.

For example, Don Loy, vice president for programming operations at the Rochester ABC affiliate, WOKR-TV Channel 13, noted that he had received a handful of critical calls and e-mail about the show prior to the first broadcast.

Meanwhile, the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights announced Sept. 19 that it was calling for a boycott of the show's sponsors.

But Loy added that the day after the show aired, a Catholic priest — whose name he didn't get — stopped by the station to compliment it on the program.

Father Coiro, though, had few compliments for "Nothing Sacred." The priest had reviewed scripts for six episodes of the show at the behest of ABC's Department of Broadcast Standards and Practices since last March, he said. In a telephone interview, Father Coiro stressed that he's played merely the role of a reviewer, not a consultant, and that, in fact, he found much in the first episode that was objectionable.

For example, Father Coiro pointed out that the show inaccurately depicted how the average priest would handle hearing the confession of such sins as abortion, as well as how a priest would teach about other sexual sins.

"This is not the portrayal of your ordinary, average priest," Father Coiro said of "Nothing Sacred."

A Jesuit in New York City reportedly wrote the series; the credits list his pseudonym.

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