

Director joins in protests

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

Michael Theisen and his 16-year-old son, David, were among a country full of television viewers who didn't believe what they'd just seen during the Super Bowl halftime show Feb. 1.

"We looked at each other, and I said, 'What? What was that?'" recalled Theisen, who serves as diocesan director of youth ministry.

The incident — in which Justin Timberlake exposed the right breast of pop singer Janet Jackson by tearing off part of her top during a duet — has spawned national debate over appropriateness on the airwaves. Like many others, Theisen has done more than just talk: He has taken action to voice his displeasure.

Two days after the telecast Theisen sent e-mails and faxes of protest to the National Football League; CBS, which broadcast the Super Bowl; MTV, which produced the halftime show; and Viacom, the parent company of both CBS and MTV. Also that day Theisen circulated an e-mail appeal to approximately 250 youth-ministry contacts at diocesan parishes and schools, encouraging them to protest as well.

"This was both a direct invasion of family values as well as a poor and unfortunate message to young teens of both sexes," Theisen charged in his e-mail comments.

Meanwhile, the Federal Communications Commission has reported receiving more than 200,000 complaints, and FCC Chairman Michael Powell has ordered an investigation into the incident, which took place



Pierre Ducharme/Reuters

Janet Jackson reacts as Justin Timberlake prepares to tear off part of her costume at the end of their halftime performance at Super Bowl XXXVIII in Houston Feb. 1.

during a telecast that attracted an estimated 90 million viewers. Powell stated that he was "outraged" by what he termed "a classless, crass and deplorable stunt."

National Football League Commissioner Paul Tagliabue added that "the show was offensive, inappropriate and embarrassing to us and our fans. We will change our policy, our people and our processes for managing the halftime entertainment in the future in order to deal far more effectively with the quality of this aspect of the Super Bowl."

In an apology, CBS claimed that it had no warning such an incident was going to occur. MTV, in a statement, said "the tearing of Janet Jackson's

costume was unrehearsed, unplanned, completely unintentional and was inconsistent with assurances we had about the content of the performance." Yet both Timberlake and Jackson, who apologized repeatedly during the ensuing week, said the episode was a planned stunt gone awry.

Theisen asserted that a more serious issue than nudity was at hand on Feb. 1.

"If you're watching that as a 13-, 14- or 15-year-old boy, that person can't help but put themselves in (Timberlake's) place for a minute and store it in their own internal filing system," Theisen told the *Courier*. "I feel sorry for a woman who now has to fight that much harder with a guy who thinks he's being cool."

Theisen said Feb. 9 that he had not yet gotten a reply from the NFL, CBS, MTV or Viacom. However, he was pleased with CBS's handling of its Grammy Awards broadcast on Feb. 8. The show was aired on tape delay to prevent any Super Bowl-like incidents, and Timberlake and Jackson were only allowed to keep their scheduled appearances if they agreed to issue further apologies. Timberlake appeared on the Grammy show and once again apologized; Jackson cancelled.

"Certainly the current, I think, was strong," Theisen said of the backlash.

Ironically, he noted, the Timberlake-Jackson moment managed to overshadow one of the most exciting Super Bowls ever played, with the New England Patriots winning 32-29 over the Carolina Panthers at Reliant Stadium in Houston, Texas.

FOOD BANK BEGINS HUNGER INITIATIVE

Food Bank of the Southern Tier has begun its "Check Out Hunger" fundraising campaign.

The 11th annual initiative will run through Feb. 28. Shoppers can make contributions by having their cashier scan a coupon for \$1.47; the amount is then added to their bill. Participating stores are Wegmans, Tops, Chase-Pitkin, Jubilee Foods, Minier's Market and The Foodmart in Corning.

According to Paul Hesler, executive director for Food Bank of the Southern Tier, more than \$103,000 was raised from last year's campaign. The food bank, an agency of Catholic Charities, provides food as well as nutrition education, training and technical assistance for people in Chemung, Schuyler, Tompkins, Tioga, Steuben and Broome counties.

STUDENTS RAISE \$1,000

Third, fourth and fifth-graders at St. Mary's School in Canandaigua raised \$1,000 for Upstate Guide Dogs in East Bloomfield, which raises and trains guide dogs for the blind.

Earlier in the school year, students sponsored Amity Amen, a yellow Labrador retriever who is a guide-dog-in-training. To help with her training expenses, each class created a quilt to be raffled off during the school's Third Annual Business Carnival Jan. 30.

According to fourth-grade teacher Suzanne Giovenco, winners of the raffle were Christine Halter, Jean Ward and fourth-grader Katie Johnstone.

CORRECTION

Information contained in the Jan. 22 obituary for Sister of Mercy Lucille Lenhard changed after the *Catholic Courier* went to press. Sister Lenhard's funeral liturgy was celebrated in the motherhouse chapel by Father John O'Connor.

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