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Vatican sex, money scandals subject of PBS documentary

by Dennis Coday

NCR Today

PBS' award winning news and documentary program, 'Frontline,' is to air tonight (Feb. 25) 'Secrets of the Vatican,' from British director Antony Thomas and co-producer Jason Berry, a name that should be well-known to *NCR* readers.

Most PBS stations will broadcast the show Tuesday, February 25, at 9 p.m. eastern time, but check your local TV listings to get the correct time.

Here's how a press release I got describes the show:

'Secrets of the Vatican' illuminates the challenges facing Pope Francis as he tries to reform the Vatican bureaucracy, root out corruption, and chart a new course for the Church.

The documentary tells the epic, inside story of the collapse of the Benedict papacy, from a far-reaching clergy sex abuse scandal, to money laundering and corruption at the Vatican Bank, to power struggles and cronyism within the Holy See, to hypocrisy within the Vatican when it comes to homosexuality.

Work on the film began more than a year ago. Berry talks about his involvement with the project in an interview with his hometown newspaper, New Orleans' *The Times-Picayune*. Here's Berry's synopsis of the film:

- The film takes viewers into the Vatican's baroque internal dynamics?
- The infighting under Pope Benedict that exploded in the Vatican Bank and Vatileaks scandals?
- Viewers will get a clear story of the last pope betrayed by his own bureaucracy.
- Antony's treatment of the gay priest culture in the Vatican ? an explosive topic to be sure ? is nuanced and even-handed, certainly not homophobic.?

Brian Lowry, TV columnist for *Variety*, **writes of the program:**

Given how adept the Vatican's defenders have been at circling the wagons, there will undoubtedly be an effort to dismiss this as simply more piling on by the religion-hating media hordes. Thomas, however, builds such a persuasive case as to raise questions about how the Vatican, as a sovereign entity, can ever be changed if the onslaught of bad publicity hasn't led to greater soul-searching already.

? credit Frontline (working in concert with the U.K.'s Channel 4) with another strong piece of investigative journalism, bringing to mind the adage that where there's smoke ? even if it comes in the form of white puffs ? there's usually fire.

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