

After Banning Christmas Ad for Religious Content, ESPN Has Change of Heart

ESPN has decided to allow a Christmas commercial from a Catholic children's hospital after initially banning the ad for its religious content.

The sports network had banned the commercial because it included references to God and celebrating the birth of Christ, officials at the Cardinal Glennon Children's Foundation in Missouri—which provides financial support for the hospital—told Fox News' Todd Starnes.

"ESPN came back to us and said it was denied due to religious advocacy," says Dan Buck, executive director of the foundation. "We were disappointed and dumbfounded with their decision."

However, ESPN had a change of heart a few minutes after Starnes published a story on the issue.

"We have again reviewed the ads submitted for the SSM Cardinal Glennon Children's Medical Center and have concluded that we will accept the original requested commercial," reads a statement from ESPN. "It will run in Saturday's VCU at Northern Iowa basketball game on ESPNU. This decision is consistent with our practice of individual review of all ads under our commercial advocacy standards."

According to Starnes, the foundation asked ESPN to reconsider and advised them to consult with executive channels at the network. But they initially wouldn't budge.

"They said, 'Yes, it is denied,'" Buck told Starnes. "They told us the lines about 'Celebrate the birth of Jesus' and

'Help us reveal God's healing message' are problematic. That's a quote from them."

Buck says the organization has been around since 1956 and this is the first time anyone has challenged their faith beliefs. He did, however, say that since ESPN is a private entity, it has every right to determine what kind of commercials it airs. But the hospital was still not prepared to be turned away for its faith.

"We do celebrate the birth of Jesus at Cardinal Glennon," Buck told Starnes. "It's who we are. It's an engrained part of who we are. We're very proud of our faith heritage, and we promote that. We let people know that we pray for our children."

The script for the ad is below. [Click here](#) to watch the video.

"At SSM Cardinal Glennon Children's Medical Center," the commercial says, "we celebrate the birth of Jesus and the season of giving, bringing hope to the many children, parents and families that we serve. Our patients are filled with hope as they receive a message each day from the treasure chest beneath our tree of hope. Help us reveal God's healing presence this Christmas. Send your message of hope at ."