

CATHOLIC-BASHING MARKS ILLEGAL GAY MARCH

Two gay rights marches took place on June 26th. The legal march on First Avenue was festive and without incident. When the marchers passed in front of the Catholic Center on 55th St., there were no anti-Catholic gestures or catcalls. The same was not true of the illegal march on Fifth Avenue.

The demonstrators on Fifth Avenue were vulgar, both in word and in deed. In front of St. Patrick's Cathedral, they bellowed four letter words, pointed their middle finger at the Cathedral and laid down in the street. Amidst the vulgar chants were dozens of bare breasted women, as well as a dozen or more fully naked men and women. Some were dressed as cardinals, priests and nuns, while others wore satanic dress. Almost all showed some sign of disrespect as they passed the Cathedral, especially the contingents from Act Up and Pagans and Witches.

Dr. William A. Donohue, president of the Catholic League, had this to say about the event.

"What happened on Fifth Avenue on June 26th was in stark contrast to the respectful and legal demonstration on First Avenue. Those who marched on Fifth Avenue showed no respect for the law, engaged in the most vile anti-Catholic behavior and jeopardized the public safety of all New Yorkers. Led by Act Up, the gay radicals once again showed their anarchists' stripes by flaunting a court order not to march. As a result, those who may have needed the services of an ambulance, fire truck or police car were unnecessarily placed at risk. But none of this seemed to matter, not even to those normally accustomed to editorializing about health and safety issues.

"The degree of anti-Catholic bigotry that was vented in front

of St. Patrick's Cathedral could not have been outdone by the Ku Klux Klan. Filled with hate, the demonstrators conducted themselves in a manner that gives new meaning to the term blasphemous. They also showed how very different they really are from all other protesters: only gay events inspire marchers to undress. And their mockery of the one institution that has done more to service AIDS patients than any other in the city of New York shows how irrational this segment of the gay population is.

"In addition to the vengeful Fifth Avenue protesters, criticism must also be made of Mayor Giuliani, Police Commissioner Bratton and the media. The mayor and police commissioner allowed a court order to be disobeyed, thus signaling a collapse of authority. The media failed to report the Catholic-bashing that took place outside of St. Patrick's Cathedral. If the identical behavior had taken place outside an Orthodox Jewish synagogue, it is doubtful that the disrespect would have gone unreported."

The Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights is the nation's largest Catholic civil rights organization. It defends the right of Catholics—lay and clergy alike—to participate in American life without defamation or discrimination.