

COVERING UP FOR ACT UP

New York Times reporter James Barron recently wrote a story about former Senate majority leader George Mitchell being named the grand marshal of this year's New York St. Patrick's Day Parade. He mentioned that a gay group led by Brendan Fay is being allowed to march in this year's parade. He recounted how much has changed since a gay uprising in 1989. "The controversy began in December 1989," he wrote, "when thousands demonstrated outside St. Patrick's Cathedral over statements made by Cardinal John J. O'Connor on abortion, homosexuality and AIDS."

That is not exactly what happened. Barron left out the most salient aspect of this protest—what happened inside the cathedral. He should read his own newspaper's account.

The *Times* editorial of December 12, 1989 described how demonstrators "stormed St. Patrick's Cathedral." It noted that "They entered the cathedral and repeatedly interrupted the service. They lay down in the aisles, chained themselves to pews and sought to shout down Cardinal O'Connor as he said mass. One protester is reported to have disrupted even the administering of communion with an act of desecration that deeply offended worshippers."

The act of desecration was spitting the Eucharist on the floor. No wonder Mayor Ed Koch, who was there, said he was shocked by the "fascist tactics" of the protesters.

Everyone knows that if Catholics demonstrated outside a hall where gay activists were holding forth, and some of them went crazy—storming the event—no reporter, then or later, would ever write about it without mentioning what happened inside. Yet gay fascists can disrupt a Mass and desecrate the Eucharist, and years later the *Times* only noted that "thousands demonstrated outside St. Patrick's Cathedral."

It would be wrong to say this is poor journalism—it's rewriting history.