

Episcopal Church Provides Forum For Catholic Bashing

The Episcopal church of St. Mark's in New York's East Village has long had a reputation as a center for the alternative culture. On February 13, however, it moved from alternative to degrading when it provided a forum for an offensive, bigoted and anti-Catholic "poetry" reading.

The main features were readings from "The Pope is a Pedophile," an explicitly anti-Catholic work popular with some members of the gay community and another selection entitled "Icon Casserole." The author and presenter, Kevin O'Neill, released a press statement announcing his reading and took that opportunity as well to air his slanted and bigoted views: the release contained scurrilous statements such as "Given the Catholic Churchs [sic] proclivity for the sexual exploitation of docile, defenseless children, especially young boys... " and "The nefarious papist doctrine involving the surreptitious sexual subjugation of innocent youth by ranks of catholic [sic] clergy..." Errors of fact were also evident in the news release.

In a press release issued by the Catholic League on February 16, William Donohue, President of the Catholic League, gave the following statement:

"I have never heard of Kevin O'Neill, but I have heard of St. Mark's Church. It is absolutely astounding that any church would give a platform to those who seek to malign the leaders of any religion. If a Catholic Church allowed its facilities to be used by those who sought to bash the Episcopal Church, we would never hear the end of it.

"Unfortunately, this is not the first time that an Episcopal church has been used to attack Catholicism. On June 25, 1994,

a renegade Catholic gay group, Dignity, held a 'mass' at St. Bartholomew's Church in midtown Manhattan, using the occasion to mock the Catholic Church.

"I have no doubt that the large majority of the faithful of every religious community, including Episcopalians, do not sanction bigotry against another religion. But it is a pity nonetheless that some simply don't care whom they offend and where they ventilate their offenses."

The Catholic League has registered its protest with the rector of St. Mark's and the Episcopal bishop of New York City. It is our sincere hope that the Episcopal church, and St. Mark's in particular, will be more careful in the future for what purposes they allow their facilities to be used.