

Eugene, Oregon Rewards Anti-Catholic Exhibition

On September 16, the city of Eugene, Oregon, hosted the Eugene Celebration Parade. A panel of volunteer judges gave cash prizes to the top entries. Winning second prize (\$200) was a group called the "Rickies." Their exhibition included 18 people dressed as the Pope, bishops, priests and nuns. The title of their entry, "Pope Goes the Weekend," was a play on the theme "Pop Goes the Weekend." Books titled *Pope Fiction* were held by people dressed as monks and there was a man dressed as the Pope named George Ringo. In obvious reference to the Beatles rock stars George Harrison and Ringo Starr, "Pope George Ringo" rode atop a float wearing a papal tiara.

As the float passed St. Mary Catholic Church, some of the Rickies ran onto church steps and lifted their cassocks and habits in exaggerated bows and genuflections. Area Catholics were offended by this exhibition and a complaint was filed with the Human Rights Commission in Eugene. The Catholic League is supporting the complaint, filed originally by Michael Whitney of Springfield, Oregon. A ruling on the complaint had not been made when *Catalyst* went to print.

In response to this incident, Catholic League president William Donohue offered the following comment to the press:

"It is always distressing to learn of anti-Catholic bigotry, but it is doubly distressing to learn that public officials have done nothing to combat it or to denounce it. Eugene Mayor Ruth Bascom still refuses to condemn the Catholic bashing that took place in her city on September 16. Though the prizes came from parade entry fees, the celebration steering committee is a city-sanctioned group.

"Mayor Bascom doubts that what the 'Rickies' did was

intentional. The best she can offer is that we should 'be respectful of the deep roots of religious beliefs.' But that is a shallow and unsatisfactory remark. Having contacted her office, it seems plain that Mayor Bascom is prepared to let the matter rest. The Catholic League, however, is not.

"We will publish an open letter to Mayor Bascom in the *Register-Guard*, securing a half-page ad to register our concerns. It is hoped that this action will motivate the Mayor to make a forceful statement condemning anti-Catholicism, thus assuring Catholics everywhere that bigotry will not be tolerated in Eugene."

If necessary, the Catholic League will bring this case before the U.S. Civil Rights Commission.