

Gay Parades Bash Catholics

This past June, Gay Pride Parades were held in several cities across the country. Unlike all other parades, these marches have a negative message to them. The target of abuse is the Catholic Church.

In San Francisco, a group called Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence mocked all Catholic clergy and religious, including the Pope. In Boston, a group of pro-life gays were so taunted and jeered at that Philip Arcidi, president of the Pro-Life Alliance of Gays and Lesbians, said he had “never seen such hate exhibited at a gay or lesbian function.” And in New York, gays indulged in obscene behavior in front of St. Patrick’s Cathedral. It was in New York that the League mounted its greatest protest.

In the last edition of *Catalyst*, a letter from William Donohue to New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani was published calling on the Mayor to move the starting point of the parade to a spot below St. Patrick’s Cathedral. As it turned out, the Mayor did not accede to the League’s demand. But the League’s pressure did lead to some concessions nonetheless.

Mayor Giuliani refused to march in the Gay Pride Parade as it passed in front of St. Patrick’s Cathedral, electing instead to join the march a few blocks south of the Cathedral.

Perhaps most significant, the Mayor announced that the police would crack down on lawlessness, warning gays that a repeat performance of last year’s outrageous displays would not be countenanced. The result was that the conduct of the parade’s participants was clearly better than the previous year, though still unacceptable by any standard.

The kind of pressure that the Catholic League brought to bear included contacting the White House, the New York State Attorney General’s office, the New York Police Commissioner

and the police chief in charge of the parade. The League asked that observers be sent from the U.S. Department of Justice and the New York State Attorney General's office, the purpose of which would be to monitor the parade for federal and state law violations. Word of the League's action spread quickly through the New York community: every media opportunity the League had was used to convey its plan.

The Catholic-bashing element to the Gay Pride Parade was so evident that even the parade's organizers never fully disavowed their intent. For example, when Janice Thorn, the co-chairman of the parade's sponsors, Heritage of Pride, was asked to comment on the League's statement that her group had deliberately targeted St. Patrick's, she responded briskly, "That's an interesting idea."

When the parade began, St. Patrick's was sealed like a war zone. No one could get near it as the police barricaded the Cathedral and the sidewalk across the street. Marching in the parade were drag queens, cross-dressers on Rollerblades, the Butch/Femme Society, the sado-macho brigade in black leather and Men of Discipline. Though the North American Man/Boy Love Association did not march as a separate unit, the presence of the child molesters was noted in the program. Men in jock straps simulating oral sex in front of the Cathedral (while Sunday Mass was going on) were perhaps the most vulgar of them all.

The most flagrant anti-Catholicism came from Catholic Ladies for Choice. In this group, there were gays and lesbians dressed as nuns carrying coat hangers and lesbians dressed as nuns carrying tam-bourines. Most incredible was the gay man who wore a black bra and a black jock strap with a nun's veil on his head and a huge set of rosary beads around his otherwise naked body. There was also someone dressed as the Pope with a banner that read, "The Catholic Church, a history of murder, lies, censorship, oppression and hypocrisy." And, of course, there were the usual taunts while marchers

processed past the Cathedral.

The Catholic League hired a professional photographer to take pictures of the parade as it passed in front of St. Patrick's. It is now making available to many leaders in government, education, business and the media a sample of the pictures.

Peter Powers, the aide closest to Mayor Giuliani, has agreed to meet with Dr. Donohue regarding the parade. The results of that meeting will be announced in a future edition of *Catalyst*.