

GAY PRIDE PARADE SPARES CATHOLICS

This year's New York Gay Pride Parade was the first one in memory that did not include even one exhibition of anti-Catholicism. In past years, men and women dressed as priests and nuns, did satanic dances, went naked in the streets and made obscene gestures in front of St. Patrick's Cathedral. That is why the Catholic League protested and sought to get the march to begin at a point below the Cathedral.

In the interim between the 1995 and 1996 Gay Pride Parades, Dr. Donohue and Bernadette Brady met twice with top officials in the administration of Mayor Rudolph Giuliani lodging their complaints. They showed pictures of the outrageous behavior that took place in front of St. Patrick's in past years and requested that the starting point of the parade be moved away from the Cathedral.

Donohue and Brady made it clear that the issue was not gays, but anti-Catholicism. Indeed, in a news release on the subject, the league spelled out its position without ambiguity: "The Catholic League does not question the right of gays to march. What it objects to is the anti-Catholic behavior and lewd exhibitions that take place every year in front of St. Patrick's. If straights dressed up in Catholic garb and made insulting gestures at the Cathedral, we would complain just as much. If straights went naked in the streets, we would complain just as much. If straights simulated oral sex in front of the Cathedral, we would complain just as much. Our complaint, then, is with the behavior of some of the marchers and with the failure of gay leaders to condemn the vulgarity that is attendant to the Gay Pride March."

Though the Giuliani officials were sympathetic to the argument that Donohue and Brady made, the mayor's appointees cited

precedent as a legal reason why it would be difficult to move the parade's starting point at this juncture. Just days before the march, Donohue contacted the mayor's office again, making certain they understood his concerns.

While it is difficult to say exactly why there was no anti-Catholicism in this year's Gay Pride Parade, there is reason to believe that the league's objections carried weight with the Giuliani administration and, ultimately, with the organizers of the march.

In any event, the march was still marked by indecency and was still underreported by the media. Evan Gahr of the *New York Post* put it well: "Despite the steady stream down Fifth Avenue of drag queens, various leather enthusiasts, men wearing just their underwear and even a woman who appeared with 'proud political polysexual' scrawled on her bare chest, local TV stations ignored the lewdness and bent over backwards to depict homosexuals as just like everyone else."

Boston's Gay Pride Parade was even worse. A man walked naked on stilts, two men in grass skirts exposed themselves to the crowd and two topless women cuddled each other while on a bed. So while the 1996 parades were not as bad as previous marches, there is still wide room for improvement.