

Gay Rights Week Marked by Illegal Parade, Anti-Catholic Furor

From June 18th to the 26th, New York was home to the largest gathering of homosexuals the world has ever seen. U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno did her part by welcoming people with AIDS from all over the world, suspending the ban against those with a communicable disease from entering the country. But what began as the Gay Games ended in an ugly display of anti-Catholic bigotry.

Throughout the week the blame for AIDS was put on everyone but those responsible for it. Most disgusting were the countless photos of former President Ronald Reagan that were altered to suggest that he has AIDS; the red blotches that were placed on his face adorned billboards in every corner of Manhattan.

The events that were of most interest to Catholic League members occurred on the last weekend of the festivities. On Friday night, June 24th, Dignity – an organization of homosexuals who claim to be Catholic, though they are not recognized by the Church – held a demonstration across the street from St. Patrick's Cathedral.

The Friday night vigil outside St. Patrick's was poorly attended. No more than 200 persons showed up to sing a few songs and listen to the two speakers, "Rev." Jim Mallon and Marianne Duddy. "Father" Mallon is a defrocked priest, and Ms. Duddy is the national president of Dignity. Both had the same message: there are two churches in the Catholic faith, one for the hierarchy and the other for the people. According to this logic, the "institutional Church" is not representative of the masses and that is why Mallon and Duddy urged the people to "take back their Church."

On Saturday, June 25th, St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church hosted Dignity. The Park Avenue Cathedral was packed for the "Mass." A man wearing earrings, a necklace and short leather pants greeted the crowd with a program of the event. The Prayer of the Faithful, in an allusion to the discredited "history" book by Boswell (story, pg. 6) included calls for the Church to "once again recognize" homosexual relations. There was a Hymn to the New Age and a Lord's Prayer which began, "Our Mother/Father in heaven...." But most striking was the homilist, Dr. Mary Hunt.

Dr. Hunt drew a distinction between the "hierarchical Church" and what she believed to be the "real" Church. But she didn't bother to explain why a group of officially unrecognized Catholics could in any way substitute itself for the official Church. She was too busy talking about the "Legacy of Love" that the movement had allegedly spawned to worry about such particulars.

Presiding over this gathering of "lesbians, gays, bi-sexuals, and transgendered persons" was Episcopal priest Ronald E.F. Hoskins. It was ironic. A renegade Catholic group that could not find a Catholic church in all of New York in which to hold its so-called Mass turned for help to the one church that has lost more members than any other because it has yielded to the pop culture on virtually every demand.

Two gay rights marches on Sunday, June 26th marked the grand finale of the week. A legal march on First Avenue was festive and without incident, but the demonstrators on Fifth Avenue were vulgar, both in word and in deed. In front of St. Patrick's Cathedral, they bellowed four letter words, pointed their middle finger at the Cathedral and laid down in the street. Amidst the vulgar chants were dozens of bare breasted women, as well as a dozen or more fully naked men and women. Almost all showed some sign of disrespect as they passed the Cathedral, especially the contingents from Act Up and Pagans and Witches.

Dr. William A. Donohue had this to say about the event:

"What happened on Fifth Avenue on June 26th was in stark contrast to the respectful and legal demonstration on First Avenue. Those who marched on Fifth Avenue showed no respect for the law, engaged in the most vile anti-Catholic behavior and jeopardized the public safety of all New Yorkers. Led by Act Up, the gay radicals once again showed their anarchists' stripes by flaunting a court order not to march.

"The degree of anti-Catholic bigotry that was vented in front of St. Patrick's Cathedral could not have been outdone by the Ku Klux Klan. Filled with hate, the demonstrators conducted themselves in a manner that gives new meaning to the term blasphemous. They also showed how very different they really are from all other protesters: only gay events inspire marchers to undress. And their mockery of the one institution that has done more to service AIDS patients than any other in the city of New York shows how irrational this segment of the gay population is.

"In addition to the vengeful Fifth Avenue protesters, criticism must also be made of Mayor Giuliani, Police Commissioner Bratton and the media. The media failed to report the Catholic-bashing that took place outside of St. Patrick's Cathedral. If the identical behavior had taken place outside an Orthodox Jewish synagogue, it is doubtful that the disrespect would have gone unreported."