

Gays Bent on Crashing St. Patrick's Day Parade

By Bill Donohue

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On June 19, 1995, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled 9-0 that Boston's St. Patrick's Day parade was a privately run operation that could write its own rules for participation.

Writing for the high court, Justice David Souter noted that gays and lesbians had never been barred from marching in the parade; they were banned from marching under their own banners. The court's unanimous ruling was a victory for the First Amendment right to freedom of assembly.

Once this decision was reached, gay and lesbian groups in many cities, including New York, were angry, and some tried, unsuccessfully, to march without a permit on the same day as the big parade.

The protests quickly fizzled: Only a very small contingent of gays and lesbians showed up in subsequent years. Now the fight has been rekindled, thanks to New York Mayor Bill de Blasio: He is not marching in the parade because gays and lesbians can't march under their own banner. Other public officials have followed suit.

It must be noted that the organizers of the parade, the St. Patrick's Day Parade Committee, do not allow pro-life Catholics to march under their own banners. Nor are NRA Catholics allowed. But just as gays can march, so can pro-lifers and NRA members; they simply must blend in like everyone else. No one feels victimized save for homosexuals.

Besides the huge march up Fifth Avenue, there are many local St. Patrick's Day parades; they are usually held on the weekends prior to the big one. On March 2, Mayor de Blasio marched in the Sunnyside, Queens "St. Pat's for All" parade, organized by gay Catholics.

He looked lovely with his arm around Pandora Panti Bliss, an Irish drag queen. In one sense, this was a plus: It showed exactly what the goal of these gay activists is. They do not want to honor St. Patrick – they want to draw attention to themselves.

Mayor de Blasio looked even more foolish when his spokesman said the reason his boss would not march in the St. Patrick's Day parade in the Rockaways, held the day before the Sunnyside one, was because gays were banned from marching in their own unit.

This was false – they can. More likely, he was afraid of being booed by those who live there. The Rockaways are home to legions of Irish cops and firefighters. For the same reason, the mayor also didn't march in the parade held on Staten Island, though the ban on a separate gay contingent didn't stop him from marching as a public official before he became mayor.

Adding to de Blasio's confused approach to the St. Patrick's Day parade was his decision to cancel the annual breakfast at Gracie Mansion, the mayor's official residence. I have publicly accused him of not wanting to associate with Irish Catholics; apparently such criticism has had an effect because the breakfast has been reinstated.

What is particularly disturbing about this contrived controversy is the reaction of gay activists and public officials. The Stonewall Democrats have accused the parade of "breathing hate." The following have levied the charge "bigoted" at the parade: City Councilman Daniel Patrick Dromm;

Irish Queers; the Irish Independent; and Denis Hamill of the Daily News. Moreover, dozens of New York notables have signed a statement accusing the parade of discrimination.

People such as Brendan Fay, an Irish gay activist, Niall O'Dowd of the Irish Central, and even Father Brian Jordan OFM, are proposing various "solutions" and attempts to "mediate" this issue. But there is nothing to solve – they lost.

They lost in the U.S. Supreme Court, and in the court of public opinion. Quite frankly, there is nothing to mediate with those who are bent on crashing the parade. If there is any doubt about this, consider that the organizers of the Boston St. Patrick's Day parade approved a bid this year to what they thought was a gay veterans' group, but had to rescind their invitation after they found out they were lied to. It is not a legitimate veterans group, and the marchers intended to wear gay T-shirts.

The New York City St. Patrick's Day parade is as Catholic as it is Irish: it begins with a mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral. Over 200,000 march in the world's largest St. Patrick's Day parade, and they have been doing so every year since 1762.

Those who truly believe in diversity and tolerance love the parade for what it is – a celebration of St. Patrick and Irish heritage. That some want to deny Irish Catholics their constitutional rights, when no one is stopping them from having their own parade, is a sad commentary on the state of our culture.

A little over two months ago, de Blasio won in a landslide election, yet his approval rating today stands in the 30s. His arrogance is on a par with his contempt for the St. Patrick's Day parade.

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