

## NATION

# Gay activists to pay for cemetery protest

By Valerie Richardson  
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

DENVER — Four homosexual-rights activists convicted of vandalizing a Catholic cemetery to protest the church's stands on contraception and homosexuality have been sentenced to community service and probation instead of jail.

The defendants were also required to issue an apology to the families of those whose graves were desecrated Jan. 14 at Mount Olivet Cemetery, but not to the Archdiocese of Denver, which runs the burial site.

The activists pleaded guilty to placing plastic bags spray-painted with the word "AIDS" over about 300 tombstones. The cemetery also was littered with signs that said "Jesus Died of AIDS" and "BVM [Blessed Virgin Mary] Sez: No Latex, No Sex."

Jefferson County District Judge James Zimmerman sentenced the defendants Friday to two years' probation for desecrating a venerated object. The two men and two women, none of whom are Colorado residents, were also required to pay \$1,680 to repair a large stone crucifix that was damaged during the vandalism.

Three of the defendants will serve their community-service sentence with the Archdiocese of Denver. The fourth, Nadine R. Con-

nelly, 30, said she is philosophically opposed to the church and will work elsewhere.

An official with the archdiocese later said the church was satisfied with the resolution of the case.

"What was most disturbing was the intrusion on sacred space. And that leaves a feeling of violation among the families," official Fran Maier told the Denver Post. "Those feelings can't be settled in court."

After the verdict, defendant Madrid St. Angelo, 28, said the protest was in response to the passage of Amendment 2, Colorado's 1992 anti-homosexual rights initiative, and "indifference, intolerance and hatred generated toward HIV-infected people."

"We never intended to harm or emotionally devastate anyone," said Mr. St. Angelo, who said he and his lover, co-defendant Taylor St. John, 36, were HIV-positive.

The incident came shortly after another well-publicized protest by homosexual-rights activists in Colorado. On Nov. 7, a dozen demonstrators stood up during services at a Colorado Springs church, blew whistles and threw condoms at the worshippers.

Protestors later said the melee was aimed at Will Perkins, a leader of Colorado for Family Values, the organization that placed Amendment 2 on the November 1992 ballot.