

Stonewall at 25

GAYS CELEBRATE 25 YEARS OF LIBERATION AND LICENSE

William A. Donohue

ON JUNE 27, 1969, seven New York City policemen raided a small Greenwich Village bar under the suspicion that the club was operating without a liquor license. Inside the Stonewall bar the cops found boxes of illegal booze and an assortment of drag queens, transsexuals, and other sexual deviants. When the bust started, the transvestites and their homosexual friends attacked the police and tried to burn them alive by throwing lighter fluid and matches on them.

This bizarre event started the gay rights movement. A quarter-of-a-century later "Stonewall 25" took place in New York, celebrating two-and-a-half decades of what homosexuals regard as liberation. Unfortunately, as a direct consequence of experiencing this gay liberation, many of those who basked in the libertinism of the 1960s and 70s never made it to Stonewall 25. Fewer still are expected to make it to the next round of Stonewall celebrations: a common poster in the two gay rights parades that closed the events of Stonewall 25 read, "How Many of Us Will Be Alive for Stonewall 35?" No one seems to know.

From June 18 to June 26, everyone was commenting on the increased visibility of gays in New York. Indeed, at the closing parades on Sunday, June 26, it appeared as though only a handful of those in New York weren't gay. Men kissed men and women held women, but noticeably absent were children. The kids, of course, were with their parents, and straights of every political persuasion decided that this was one bash they could skip. In many ways that's too bad, because had they seen what I saw on June 26, the high priests of tolerance among them might have been shaken.

The media loved it. But they loved it not simply because the week's festivities made for good copy;

they loved it because they love the gay rights movement. There were some exceptions—the New York Post wasn't very supportive—but by and large the media embraced the movement with a fervor that was unparalleled. The New York Times won first prize, though *Newsday* proved to be a close second.

Before, during, and after Stonewall 25 week, the New York Times printed endless articles on everything from where gay teenagers could find lovers (complete with a street map) to the glories of gay architecture. So obsessed with gays was the "newspaper of record" that former *Times* writer Hilton Kramer commented, "The space and adulation which the *Times* has lavished on these events and their participants over the last 12 days far exceeded any coverage which the paper had devoted to special city events in the past."

KRAMER was particularly taken by the *Times'* editorial on the rights of drag queens and the S&M crowd, which urged Congress to pass the Employment Nondiscrimination Act ensuring the rights of "crossdressers." "A just society," the *Times* opined, "must offer the same protections to men in leather and chains as to those who wear Brooks Brothers suits." Still, the *Times* had nothing to say about those who prefer animals to boys, suggesting that the politics of inclusion has room to expand.

No gay event, it seems, can pass without making an assault on Catholicism. Catholic-bashing was most evident in the last weekend of the festivities, beginning with a vigil by Dignity across the street from Saint Patrick's Cathedral on the last Friday of June.

Dignity has no official standing with the Catholic Church. Unlike the homosexual Catholic group Courage, which does accept Church teachings and strives to live them, Dignity is comprised of gay and lesbian Catholics who flatly reject the Church's teachings and yet still consider themselves quite Catholic.

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Indeed, Father Mallon and national president Marianne Duddy gave the impression that members of Dignity are more Catholic than the Pope.

Father James Mallon is a former member of the Institute of Charity and no longer holds a position in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia or anywhere else. Mallon spoke at the evening vigil and, along with Ms. Duddy, placed a wreath on the steps of Saint Patrick's to symbolize all those who have died from AIDS. Both had the same message: there are two churches in the Catholic religion, the hierarchical or institutional church, and the "real" church. It was their goal, they said, to "take back the church."

ACCORDING TO Dignity, the hierarchical church, which is to say the Catholic Church, does not represent the Catholic Church. They do. Yet, even the most committed members among them must know that few Catholics have ever even heard of Dignity, much less think it a substitute for the Holy Father and the Magisterium. But self-deception is not in short supply in the gay community these days. In any event, the protest drew no more than 200 people and lasted a mere 25 minutes.

On Saturday they packed them in for a "High Mass" at Saint Bartholomew's. This is when the ironies really began. Saint Bart's is not a Catholic church—it's Episcopalian. The person who presided over the "Mass" was a renegade Catholic priest, Reverend Ronald E.F. Hoskins. A man wearing earrings, a necklace, and short, tight leather pants greeted the crowd with a printed program of the liturgy.

The Prayer of the Faithful had much to comment on, including this gem: "For the institutional Church and especially its hierarchy, grant them at least a little more wisdom and a great deal of mirth." Everyone was then asked to respond, "O God of laughter, our God, tickle them." And then came the plea: "For all women called to ordained ministry, that the keys of the kingdom may be theirs." To which the crowd boomed, "Mother god, our God, send your Holy Spirit down upon them, that she may dwell with them." The gay version of the Lord's Prayer began, "Our Mother/Father in heaven, hallowed be thy name."

The homilist at this liturgy was Mary Hunt. She has a doctorate in something and kept saying what a great day it was for "lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgendered persons." The last term was significant. Gay and feminist radicals hate nature, and that is why they avoid the term sex, in favor of *gender*, which refers to the psychological and cultural attributes of sexuality. In short, "sex" means that men and women have anatomical differences

grounded in nature, but "gender" means that male and female differences are nothing but a social construct. What these semantics really mean is that the radical left disapproves of what God has wrought.

Dr. Hunt went on at great length discussing what she termed the "legacy of love" that Stonewall 25 was celebrating. She did not explain how or why the legacy of love became the legacy of death for so many homosexuals, for to do so would require an examination of conscience, a Catholic practice for which Dignity displays scant affection. Apparently they and their non-Catholic lovers would prefer to believe that Ronald Reagan had more to do with causing AIDS than promiscuous anal sex: huge photos of former President Ronald Reagan were altered to suggest that he has AIDS (ugly red blotches were placed on his face) and were plastered on billboards all over the city.

The biggest event of the week was supposed to be the Sunday parade up First Avenue, but it was trumped by another march up Fifth Avenue. The former was legal and well-behaved while the latter was illegal and vulgar. Both were lily-white, especially the illegal march, and were clearly dominated by men. Though there are far more middle-aged persons in America than there are young persons, the parades gave scant evidence of this. White men in their twenties and thirties dominated. This makes sense, since the average life expectancy for gay males is 40.

Originally, there was only supposed to be one parade, but a fight between the organizers of the parade—most of whom were from out of town—and radical New York gays grew into a major divide. The initial organizers wanted the gay parade to be an international event, to send an appeal to every nation on

earth that homosexuals deserve more rights. They chose to march up First Avenue because they wanted to march past the U. N. But the New York militants weren't interested in challenging the U.N.; they wanted to attack the Catholic Church, and that is why they demanded a parade up Fifth Avenue, home of Saint Patrick's Cathedral.

Represented by the New York Civil Liberties Union, the NYCLU argued its case in front of Fed-

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eral Judge Robert P. Patterson. The NYCLU pleaded for a permit to march up Fifth Avenue, arguing that an additional parade was needed to bring attention to AIDS. Attorneys for the city maintained that one permit had already been given for a gay march, and that to grant two on the same day and at the same time would jeopardize the health and safety of all New Yorkers by impeding the passage of the police, fire, and medical officials who might be called on to respond to emergencies. The city won, but the gays marched anyway.

THE LEGAL PARADE was the biggest, drawing at least 100,000 homosexuals. For the most part, they conducted themselves well, and did not show disrespect when they marched in front of the Catholic Center on 55th Street. Gays from around the world carried a one-mile rainbow flag and wore T-shirts with such inscriptions as "I Can't Even Think Straight." People threw money into the center of the outstretched 30-foot-wide multicolored banner, only to have the wind rock the flag, resulting in cash flying all over the street. Someone finally concluded that the flag was too long to make the left turn onto 57th Street and decided to razor-cut the banner into smaller sections.

The illegal parade on Fifth Avenue (*Newsday* insisted on calling it the "illegal" and "unauthorized" parade, thus granting it a so-called status) was altogether different. While watching the legal parade on First Avenue, I periodically asked a policeman the whereabouts of the illegal march. When I learned that the parade had reached 23rd Street, I decided to walk over to Fifth Avenue to find a spot across from Saint Patrick's Cathedral.

When I got to the Cathedral I saw a line of police officers lining the sides of the street. Saint Pat's was under siege. So was the residence of Cardinal O'Connor. There were cops everywhere, waiting and watching. I nestled up close to the barrier, and along with a sea of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgendered persons, I saw the protesters making their way up Fifth.

Finally the parade made its way to the Cathedral. Leading the way of this illegal parade were the cops. On scooters they escorted the criminals, making certain that no one abused them of their rights (at this point I thought it was safe to lean on the barrier). Right beyond the police escorts were the gay and lesbian lawyers of Act-Up. Act-Up is a gay terrorist organization, one that had broken into Saint Patrick's Cathedral in 1989, interrupting Mass and spitting the Host on the floor. With "Act-Up Legal" emblazoned on their T-shirts, the attorneys held pen and pad, taking notes and insuring that the rights of their clients were not violated by the police. They had nothing to worry about as the cops were impotent.

To get a sense of how the marchers behaved in front of Saint Pat's, consider first that the parade included a contingent from the North American Man-Boy Love Association. NAMBLA had been banned by the international parade on First Avenue, but was welcomed by the Act-Up terrorists on Fifth. The child molesters (their motto is "Eight is too late") fit right in with the Radical Faeries, drag queens, and Leather Fetishists. What unified them more than anything was their hatred of the Catholic Church.

In front of Saint Patrick's Cathedral, the crowd stuck out its middle fingers at the church and screamed, on command, "F___ You." They said it over and over again. They laid down in the street. They chanted "Confess, confess, the cardinal wears a dress." The group Pagans and Witches did a satanic dance. They dressed in scarlet robes as cardinals. They dressed as priests and nuns; they went nude. And the cops, under orders, did nothing.

When a police captain was asked by a reporter why there were no arrests for parading in the nude, he said: "As long as they are peaceful and moving along, it's OK. We don't want another Stonewall." Better still was the response of Lieutenant Raymond O'Donnell, a police spokesman. He said that he would "have to check the penal law" to see if public nudity was a crime. But no one beat the comment of the Deputy Mayor, Fran Reiter, who hailed the illegal march as "great."

WHEN MAYOR Rudy Giuliani was asked about his collapse of authority, he replied that it would be too difficult to arrest 6,000 people. He never explained why he bothered to get a court order barring the march. Only time will tell whether the Klan will want to march in front of Reverend Calvin Butts' Baptist church in Harlem, or in front of an Orthodox Jewish synagogue in Brooklyn, but in the event they are denied a permit, apparently they can march if they can summon enough protestors.

What happened on June 26 was not just a gay victory. It was a big win for Catholic-bashing. Catholics are hated with a ferocity that is unmatched by any other religious, racial, or ethnic group in the country—not by most people, of course, but Catholics are unquestionably hated by a large portion of the left. The Catholic Church is rightly perceived as an obstacle to the sexual recklessness that marks the radical feminist and homosexual movements. Insult, degradation, derision, disparagement, calumny, blasphemy—nothing is off-limits. That all this is happening in the name of rights, and with the blessings of the authorities, is perhaps the greatest perversity of them all. ✚