

Parade held without gay marchers

By Tracy Early
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK — The 231st St. Patrick's Day parade took place in New York March 17 after legal attempts failed to force acceptance of a homosexual group.

The case is not closed, however, and the parade sponsors, the Ancient Order of Hibernians, appeared likely to face further legal and political pressure to accept the Irish Lesbian and Gay Organization as a marching unit. The Hibernians had suggested they might give up the parade rather than do that.

A similar controversy erupted in Boston, but about two dozen Irish-American homosexuals were allowed to march in that city's March 15 parade under their own banner. Organizers of a St. Patrick's Day parade in Cork, Ireland, also allowed marchers from the town's Lesbian and Gay Collective.

In New York, Mayor David N. Dinkins, who had pushed for the gay organization to be included, declined to march this year. Last year, he arranged for the group to march as part of another unit and was loudly booed as he walked with them.

Others boycotting the parade were

New York Gov. Mario M. Cuomo, City Council President Andrew Stein, City Comptroller Elizabeth Holtzman, 84-year-old veteran political figure Paul O'Dwyer and others.

But Sen. Alfonse M. D'Amato, R-N.Y., who is up for re-election, and former Mayor Edward I. Koch did march.

The parade went on despite weather reports predicting rain, a call by local columnist Bill Reel to cancel it because he said security could not be ensured and a *New York Times* editorial that day saying the parade was "bound to be a joyless, bitter event" because the homosexual group was excluded.

Instead of rain, a light snow fell as the parade began at 11 a.m., but soon ceased. The afternoon brought intermittent sunshine and comfortable temperatures. No disruptive events occurred, and applauding crowds lined Fifth Avenue.

Reviewing the parade from the steps of St. Patrick's Cathedral, Cardinal John J. O'Connor told Catholic News Service that he saw no evidence the parade had been damaged.

Crowds seemed as large as ever, he said, and attendance at Mass beforehand was larger than in past years. He

declined to comment on how Hibernians handled the parade or on the boycott by officials.

He noted City Council Speaker Peter V. Vallone was the highest-ranking city official present at the Mass, and said that would not be forgotten.

In an allusion to the gay controversy, he said his task as archbishop was to follow St. Patrick in teaching what the church teaches "without ambiguity, evasion or embarrassment."

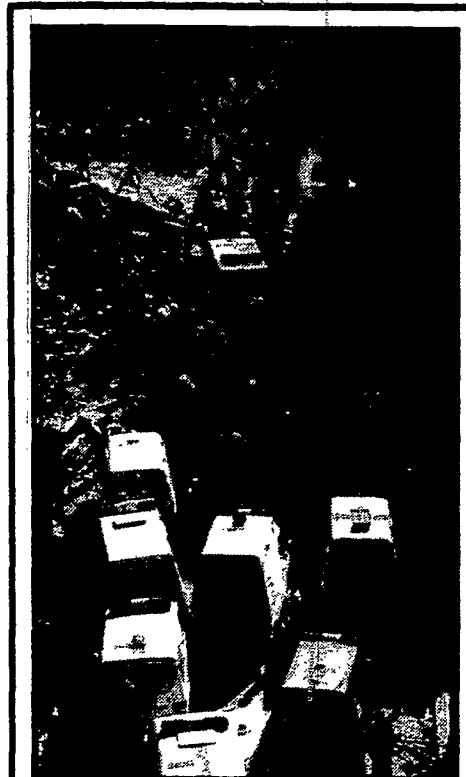
The church shows its love for its children, Cardinal O'Connor said, by its determination to tell them the truth about what is right and wrong and by its readiness "to welcome them home when they are ready to return."

But he cautioned against hostility and said no one who treated another person with contempt or violence could be considered a representative of the Catholic faith.

In defending their right to exclude the gay group, the Hibernians faced legal challenges from the New York City Human Rights Commission and from the gay group's suit in federal district court.

Rosemarie Maldonado, the commission's chief administrative law judge, ruled March 13 against the New York City Human Rights Commission forcing acceptance of the Irish Lesbian and Gay Organization. The group was put on a waiting list by organizers for participating in the parade.

But after the judge ruled, the commission's lawyer, Rolando T. Acosta, announced that he wanted more time to prepare a written brief. So the commission's case was left pending.



AP/Wide World Photos
SEARCHING FOR VICTIMS — Police and civil guard officers March 17 search through wreckage for victims of an explosion that destroyed the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires, Argentina. At least four people were killed, 81 were injured and about 30 people were trapped under the rubble, reports said.

Cardinal condemns 'domestic partners' move in D.C.

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Cardinal James A. Hickey of Washington has condemned as "an extremely dangerous precedent" a measure that would give unmarried couples legal recognition in the District of Columbia.

In a March 16 statement, the cardinal called the D.C. City Council's March 4 vote on the Health Care Benefits Expansion Act of 1992 "very disturbing" and "an attack aimed at the very heart of our community — the family."

The legislation approved by the council allows unmarried couples who live together to register with the city. Such registration would entitle the partners of municipal employees and their children to medical benefits now offered to spouses.

The measure is similar to laws in San Francisco and Seattle, and allows registered partners the same consideration as spouses in such matters as visiting privileges at hospitals. It also would allow city employees to take leaves to care for ailing partners and includes tax incentives to employers who insure such couples.

An amendment added just before the council vote would allow unmar-

ried relatives living together — such as a mother and adult daughter — to register as domestic partners. The measure is scheduled for a second vote by the council April 7, but final approval rests with Congress.

"Many of the grave problems facing our community can be attributed to the weakening of our family structure," Cardinal Hickey said. "By equating even the most transient personal relationships involving no legal responsibilities with the supremely important marriage relationship, this

legislation can only further weaken the already wounded family structure."

The cardinal said the measure would "encourage and legitimize transitory relationships and discourage the establishment of families in the District of Columbia who would strive to be faithful to their lifelong commitments and to raise their children to be productive citizens."

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