

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

SAINT PATRICK AND PARADES...

One event that I used to enjoy very much each year when I was pastor of Sacred Heart was the Saint Patrick's day parade here on Staten Island. The parade down Forest Avenue ran right through the parish and there were plenty of people who waved greetings as we all marched along. It was a fun time honoring a great saint. Well, this Sunday, March 17th we do celebrate Saint Patrick's Day and it has me thinking a little bit about this saint and his parade.

I doubt very much that Saint Patrick would care about whether we have a parade in his honor! Saints are usually humble and prayerful people who like to focus their attention on the Lord rather than themselves. Maybe, if we were able to interview Saint Patrick today, he would not be too happy over what his annual parade has become in recent years in New York City.

This year, our current Borough President, James Oddo, a Catholic, refused to march in the parade on Staten Island because a group celebrating homosexuality was not allowed to participate. In other areas, including Manhattan, gay groups are allowed to march. It seems that Staten Island is the last "hold out." Thank God!

As a priest and as a Roman Catholic, I would argue that if LGBT groups are allowed to march, the Church should petition for a name change for the parade. The parade could be called the "Irish Heritage Parade," or "The Irish Civic Parade," but it should not dishonor the name of the great apostle to Ireland Saint Patrick. The politicians who refused to march in our Staten Island Parade like Jim Oddo, Debi Rose and Max Rose spoke about discrimination and lack of inclusion. No one has said that gay people cannot march in the parade. They just can't do that under a banner that celebrates a disordered lifestyle.

Perhaps the word "disordered" seems too harsh, but the words are not mine but the Catechism of the Church. The Catechism reminds us that "The number of men and women who have deep seated homosexual tendencies is not negotiable. This inclination, which is objectively disordered, constitutes for most of them a trial." (Catechism #2358).

The Church argues that people who are gay should live a chaste lifestyle, and I am all for celebrating that! I am sure that Saint Patrick would be for that too. As a man of the gospel and a sincere follower of Jesus Christ, he strove to live by God's Law. He was the man who worked tirelessly so that the Christian Faith and Doctrine would be planted in Ireland.

One legend has it that the Saint drove out all the "snakes" from the land. However, this is just an allegory. The snakes of course represented the evil one. By his preaching Christ and His Word, Patrick banished the sinful and immoral practices of the Pagans which the Irish were in the Fifth Century.

Perhaps some of the "snakes" have slithered over to this continent in the last fifty years as a new paganism threatens to envelop our society and culture today. In his confession Patrick wrote, "Wherefore then in Ireland, they who had never the knowledge of God, but worshipped idols and things impure, now there has been lately prepared a people of the Lord and they are called the Children of God."

As children of God by our Baptism, we are called as Patrick was to be holy and to be a light in a rather darkened world. As we celebrate March 17th, may we truly honor a great saint who above all followed not the world but Jesus Christ who is the way, the truth and the life.

*Sincerely in Christ,
Father Jerome*