News




Dodger Stadium is pictured May 16 in Los Angeles. (OSV News/Gary A. Vasquez-USA Today Sports via Reuters)



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A controversial Texas bishop will lead a procession this Friday in Los Angeles sponsored by a collection of right-wing Catholic media outlets and activist groups in protest of the Los Angeles Dodgers honoring the pro-LGBT group Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence during Pride Night at Dodger Stadium.

The procession was originally slated to begin at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels, about two miles from Dodger Stadium. A revised flier for the event now indicates that participants will instead meet in a parking lot outside the ballpark.

Bishop Joseph Strickland of Tyler, Texas, an outspoken conservative prelate who has accused Pope Francis of undermining the Catholic faith, is said to be leading the procession, according to LifeSiteNews, a far-right outlet that is one of the listed sponsoring organizations.

The event's other sponsors include Church Militant, Virgin Most Powerful Internet Radio, America Needs Fatima, CatholicVote, and Catholics for Catholics, a Phoenix-based nonprofit lauded by far-right political figures such as the former Trump advisers Steve Bannon and retired Army Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn.



Bishop Joseph Strickland of Tyler, Texas, left, is shown in this 2021 file photo following the funeral Mass of Galveston-Houston Auxiliary Bishop George Sheltz. (CNS/Texas Catholic Herald/James Ramos)

A spokeswoman for the Los Angeles Archdiocese told NCR that "all aspects of the event are being handled independently" of the archdiocese. She said the archdiocese has invited parishes to pray the Litany of the Sacred Heart of Jesus at Mass or during eucharistic adoration on Friday, June 16, which is the solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus.

"It is the hope of the Archdiocese that our community of faith can unite in a moment of peaceful prayer to heal the wounds and hurt caused by this divisive decision through the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus," spokeswoman Adrian M. Alarcon told NCR in an email.

The controversy over the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, a group of LGBTQ activists who dress in drag as religious sisters and have staged events mocking Catholic

symbols and rituals, continues to roil some members of the U.S. Catholic community in the days leading up to the Pride Night event at Dodger Stadium.

**Related:** Actual sisters react to LA Dodgers and Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence

The U.S. bishops' conference this week also released a statement calling on Catholics to pray the Litany of the Sacred Heart on Friday as an act of reparation for "the blasphemies against our Lord we see in our culture today."

The statement was signed by Archbishop Timothy Broglio of the Archdiocese of the Military Services, the president of the bishops' conference; Archbishop José Gomez of Los Angeles, the immediate past president; and New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan, who serves as chairman of the conference's Committee for Religious Liberty.

Referencing the Sisters, the bishops wrote that "a professional baseball team has shockingly chosen to honor a group whose lewdness and vulgarity in mocking our Lord, His Mother, and consecrated women cannot be overstated."

The bishops added: "This is not just offensive and painful to Christians everywhere; it is blasphemy."

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In May, the Dodgers announced that they planned to present the franchise's Community Hero Award to the Sisters, citing their work raising money for HIV/AIDS patients and being involved for decades in local charitable work.

But the Sisters' provocative drag performances triggered protests, amplified in conservative media outlets, from U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio, a Florida Republican who ran for president in 2016, and right-wing groups like CatholicVote and the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights.

Amid the initial controversy, the Dodgers disinvited the Sisters, which in turn sparked withering criticisms from LGBTQ advocates and allies. The Dodgers subsequently apologized to the Sisters and reinvited them, with plans to honor the group before the Dodgers' June 16 Pride Night game against the San Francisco Giants.

That decision angered Gomez and several other church leaders who on social media and via prepared statements described the Sisters as a blatantly anti-Catholic hate group. San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone wrote an op-ed in The Wall Street Journal where he linked the Dodgers' decision to honor the Sisters with the "long, deep and sordid history of anti-Catholicism" in the United States.



Archbishop José Gomez of Los Angeles, then-president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, delivers the homily during Mass at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Nov. 14, 2022, on the first day of the fall general assembly of the U.S. bishops' conference in Baltimore. (CNS/Bob Roller)

The Dodgers' invitation also prompted organizations like LifeSiteNews and CatholicVote to spearhead online petitions calling on the franchise to rescind the honor or face a boycott until it issues an apology. CatholicVote launched a $1 million fundraising campaign to run advertisements through the Dodgers' Pride Night.

Coinciding with Pride Month, when LGBTQ rights are honored in June to commemorate the 1969 Stonewall uprising, several individuals who have criticized the Dodgers have also attacked corporations like Target, Kohl's and Bud Light for their LGBTQ-friendly marketing campaigns.

"There are consequences for these companies," CatholicVote President Brian Burch said during an interview with the conservative outlet Newsmax. Referencing conservative furor over Bud Light hiring a transgender woman to promote its beer on social media, Burch added that the Dodgers "risk becoming the Bud Light of baseball."