News



People march outside Dodger Stadium after a prayer service June 16 in Los Angeles. The team drew criticism for its annual Pride Night, during which they honored a satirical LGBTQ+ group called the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence. (AP/Jae C. Hong)

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Devout baseball fans might view their teams' performance as heavenly or hellish, depending on the quality of play. Currently, it's the Los Angeles Dodgers' handling of their annual Pride Night — not the team's record — that has provoked emotional reactions from some religious people.

Indeed, three high-ranking U.S. Catholic leaders this week suggested the team had committed blasphemy.

The Dodgers have been holding Pride Nights for 10 years, but this year's edition June 16 became entangled last month in a high-profile controversy.

Under a barrage of criticism from some conservative Catholics, the team rescinded an invitation to a satirical LGBTQ+ group called the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence to be honored at Pride Night. The Sisters' performers — mostly men who dress flamboyantly as nuns — are active in protests and charitable programs.

A week later, after a vehement backlash from LGBTQ+ groups and their allies, the Dodgers reversed course — re-inviting the Sisters' Los Angeles chapter to be honored for its charity work and apologizing to the LGBTQ+ community.

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The Dodgers' reversal was welcomed by LGBTQ+ allies, including some Catholic nuns. But it infuriated many conservative Catholics, even at the highest levels of the U.S. hierarchy.

On June 12, the team was lambasted in a statement from Archbishop José Gomez of Los Angeles, Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York, and the president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Archbishop Timothy Broglio of the Military Services. "This is not just offensive and painful to Christians everywhere; it is blasphemy," they wrote

Phoenix-based Catholics for Catholics organized what it called "a prayerful procession" in a parking lot outside Dodger Stadium. Hundreds of people, many wearing red clothing in honor of the sacred heart and toting signs, gathered in the hours before the Dodgers hosted the San Francisco Giants.

The group, which later walked from the parking lot to the intersection outside the stadium's main gate, spread out across the entrance to the ballpark under the watchful eyes of police.

Catholics for Catholics had urged participants not to bring children because "we do anticipate hostility from anti-Christian protesters."

The gathering attracted a large Los Angeles Police Department presence, with officers standing around watching as traffic approaching stadium backed up. Three helicopters flew overhead.

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One woman held a blue sign invoking the name of the late Dodgers Hall of Fame broadcaster Vin Scully, a devout Catholic, that read, "Vin Is Sad." In her other hand, a white sign said, "Uphold Dodger Code of Conduct. No Mocking Religion."

In a brief ceremony on the field with few fans yet in their seats, the Dodgers gave a Community Hero Award to the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence. The public-address announcer said the group supports meal programs in the Los Angeles area and cited "their outstanding service to the LBGTQ+ community."

The sparse crowd cheered as the PA announcer introduced Sister Unity and Sister Dominia — two men dressed flamboyantly as nuns.

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