

WORLD news BRIEFS

AUSTRALIA

About 50 gay men, lesbians and their supporters were refused communion May 31 at St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Cathedral in Melbourne when they approached Archbishop George Pell, the celebrant, wearing rainbow sashes.

"I deeply regret that such people who profess the Catholic faith would choose to mount an ideological demonstration during mass and especially at communion time," Pell said as the service concluded. "This is inappropriate. They must realize the church's teaching on this mat-



ter cannot, will not, change. Although human weakness is universal and God's mercy infinite, the path to happiness and heaven for a Catholic does not lie in seeking to reinterpret what is right or wrong."

The congregation responded with sustained applause.

One of the protesters, Michael Kelly, told reporters afterward: "For the first time in my life, I saw my 74-year-old mother, who has been a Catholic all her life, refused Holy Communion because she went forward openly in support of her gay son."

"We claim our dignity as people made in God's image and our right to freedom, justice and love, the right to live fully human lives with the sexuality that God gave us."

In late May, the Tasmanian Greens political party introduced legislation to recognize same-sex relationships in areas such as property division, wills, superannuation and worker compensation.

The measure would also extend rights to certain nonsexual same- and opposite-sex couples, such as caregivers and receivers, elderly companions, and cohabiting family members, says Richard Hale, spokesman for the Tasmanian Gay and Lesbian Rights Group.

The measure has been referred to a parliamentary committee for discussion.

CANADA

On May 28, Health Minister Allan Rock committed \$42.2 million annually to the fight against AIDS. Unlike before, the funding will not be subject to periodic reallocation.

"The Canadian strategy on HIV and AIDS will not be time-limited," Rock said. "The new funding will ensure the sustainability and responsiveness of Canada's efforts well into the next century."

Civil service and teacher pension plans in the province of Nova Scotia will recognize same-sex partners, the government announced May 26.

The decision resulted from complaints filed with the provincial Human Rights Commission.

In April, Ontario's Court of Appeal cleared the way for Canada's largest union to pay pensions to same-sex partners by altering the definition of "spouse" in the federal Income Tax Act.

The Vancouver, British Columbia, gay newspaper *Angles* has folded after 18 years for financial reasons.

Since 1993, *Angles* faced strong competition from *Xtra! West*, published by Toronto's Pink Triangle Press, which also publishes *Xtra!* in Toronto and *Capital Xtra!* in Ottawa.

EL SALVADOR

Some people living with AIDS are planning to sue the government health care system over access to AIDS treatments.

At present, the system largely lacks antibiotics and antifungals to treat opportunistic infections, fails to check the status of people's immune systems (via a CD4 cell count), and offers only AZT to fight the virus itself. AZT typically only works against HIV in combination with other antivirals.

"The right to life and health are in our constitution and we will obtain these rights," says AIDS activist Odir Miranda.

FRANCE

President Jacques Chirac denounced same-sex marriage during a June 4 speech to mothers of large families.

"The French Republic has a duty not only to recognize and defend the role of the family in our society but also to protect its legal basis in the heart of our Civil Code—I am referring to marriage law—against anything that might damage it," he said.

"We should not take the risk of distorting this law or making it banal by extending it to cover other contemporary arrangements for social life, which would take it far away from the values on which the family is based," he added.

Parliament will consider legislation later this year aimed at granting registered same-sex couples most of the rights and obligations afforded to heterosexual spouses.

ISRAEL

Israel's annual Wigstock drag festival ended in civil disobedience May 22 after police tried to break up the party at sundown, when the Jewish Sabbath began.

Organizers had earlier obtained permission to continue the festival at Independence Park until 8 p.m.



About 2,000 of the 10,000 revelers blocked the intersection of Tel Aviv's HaYarkon and Jabotinsky streets for two hours before marching to Rabin Square.

Four protesters were arrested, including the head of Hebrew University's gay student union. They were released from custody at approximately 2:30 a.m.

The Association of Lesbians, Gay Men and Bisexuals in Israel, whose AIDS project, known as Belah Do'egot, organized Wigstock, praised the protesters: "In spite of the fact that the demonstration was illegal, the board takes great pride that, after 50 years of oppression and silence, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and HIV-positive members of the community openly participated in the first unified protest of its kind in Israel."

ITALY

Queer pride organizers on five continents have endorsed the World Pride Rome 2000 march scheduled for July 8, 2000.

Scores of related events are slated for the week prior to the event.

The pride activities coincide with the Vatican's Christianity millennium jubilee, which is expected to attract more than 1 million people.

MEXICO

The country's new ambassador to Cuba, Pedro Joaquin-Coldwell, is openly bisexual, reports San Francisco's *Bay Area Reporter*.

A native of Cozumel, Joaquin-Coldwell is a lawyer who has worked as secretary of tourism, director general of the National Tourist Development Fund, head of a government refugee-aid agency and head of the Dialogue in Chiapas group. He also was governor of the state of Quintana Roo, where Cancun is located.

NETHERLANDS

The Supreme Court has ruled that a forced same-sex French kiss constitutes rape, reports *De Gay Krant*.

The victim filed suit after a 46-year-old acquaintance, with whom he had worked on an oil rig, broke into his home in Spijkenisse and kissed him.



Performers Grace Jones, Jimmy Somerville, the Weather Girls—who will be accompanied by hundreds of dancing sailors—and transsexual Eurovision song contest winner Dana International are some of the stars set to perform at the opening and closing ceremonies of Gay Games V this August in Amsterdam.

The performances will take place at the Amsterdam Docklands.

"The huge halls of the Docklands will be turned into a Palace of Swing with large stages, an indoor luna park and even a complete indoor street of entertainment," organizers boast.

VIETNAM

The national assembly has banned same-sex marriage, Agence France-Presse reports.

Legislators acted after several gay and lesbian couples held union ceremonies in recent months, distressing local officials who were unable to stop them, the news service said.

After the legislation passed, Communist Party officials reportedly descended on the Vinh Long home of Cao Tien Duyen, 23, and Hong Kim Huong, 30, and secured their signatures on a promise that they would never again live together. The two women had joined March 7 in a large public ceremony.

ZIMBABWE

The trial of former President Canaan Banana is underway in Harare.

Banana, 62, faces 11 charges of sodomy, attempted sodomy and indecent assault on seven aides, a cook, a gardener and a bodyguard.

The flood of alleged victims came forward after the bodyguard murdered a fellow officer for allegedly having teased him with the nickname "Banana's wife."

Prosecutors will call 40 witnesses—including Vice President Simon Muzenda—during the trial, which is expected to last a month.

Banana has dismissed the charges as "a mortuary of pathological lies and a malicious vendetta of vilification and character assassination."

Compiled by REX WOCKNER, with contributions from TERRY ABRAMS and JESS DURFEE

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