

NATIONAL news

go through the hassle of defining what is a domestic partnership."

The only dissenting vote was cast by Supervisor Mike Antonovich, who claimed that it was "pandering to special interests."

Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, who proposed the law, countered by saying: "This is a part of the American landscape now, it has become a part of the relationship between employers and employees. It is not the novelty it was years ago."

While the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence celebrated their 20th anniversary with a street party in the Castro on Easter Sunday, the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights called on all Catholic organizations across the nation to boycott San Francisco.

The March 29 issue of the *San Francisco Chronicle* included a half-page ad signed by William A. Donohue, president of the Catholic League. In the ad, Donohue denounced the San Francisco Board of Supervisors' vote to allow the Easter celebration. He even attacked San Francisco's much-vaunted image as a city of tolerance. The ad went on to state the boycott would be canceled if the Sisters' celebration was rescheduled to occur after Easter.

That did not happen. Wimples and whimsy were out in full force as the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence and supporters celebrated with musical performances and a "Hunky Jesus" beauty contest.

"City government has gone out of its way to associate itself with this ridicule and blasphemy," wrote Archbishop William Leveda in a column published on Good Friday.

Tom Ammiano, the gay and Roman Catholic president of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, opened the festivities saying: "The message of Easter is one of resurrection and I think that it's time in San Francisco that we resurrect the spirit of coexistence that has existed for the past 20 years."

Ammiano and Leveda are expected to conduct peace talks.

"There is a gulf, and we need to bridge it," Ammiano said.

ILLINOIS

Last September, the Rev. Gregory Dell, a Methodist minister, presided over the "holy union" of two Chicago men. By participating in that ceremony, Dell violated the Methodist Church's ban on same-sex ceremonies. The Associated Press reported March 27.

The Methodist Church retaliated late last month by suspending the Downers Grove minister. The suspension begins on July 5. It will continue until Dell signs a statement promising to comply with church law in this matter, or until the law is changed.

"I will never sign such a statement," said Dell, who's been in the church for 30 years. "If I can't be a pastor fully to all the people...you don't want me as a pastor. You really don't."

The jury was comprised of 13 pastors. Nine

were needed to find Dell guilty. The final vote was 10-3 against Dell. The same group of pastors decided the penalty. While the suspension is considered harsh, Dell could have been defrocked.

Last year, the Rev. Jimmy Creech of Omaha, Neb., was acquitted for performing a lesbian wedding because the jury decided the church's position against same-sex ceremonies was only in an advisory capacity.

Following Creech's acquittal, the church's position was elevated to church law. Dell was tried under that law.

More trials of this nature are expected. A California bishop recently filed a complaint against 69 Methodist ministers who participated in the union of a lesbian couple in January.

NATIONAL

One can find many fun, amusing, informative, educational and silly things on the Internet. One can also find many ugly, hateful, infuriating and just plain scary things on the Internet.

Among the latter are the 1,426 Internet sites identified by the Simon Wiesenthal Center as promoting racism, anti-Semitism, hate music, neo-Nazism and bomb making.

Other sites on the list include those that advocate anti-gay, anti-Catholic, anti-Muslim, pro-violence and anti-abortion positions, according to a March 24 Agence France-Presse story.

"This doesn't necessarily mean that we have more members in these different groups," said Rabbi Abraham Cooper, associate dean of the Los Angeles-based Wiesenthal Center. "But the Internet does two things. It gives [racists] a sense of empowerment and an unparalleled, unprecedented opportunity for marketing themselves 24 hours a day."

According to Cooper, in 1995 "there was exactly one hate site on the World Wide Web. By the end of 1997 there were 600, and now the report lists almost 1,500."

The report involved 14 months of research in Europe and both North and South America, the areas of the world with the most Internet users.

WYOMING

Russell Henderson, 21, one of two men charged with the brutal murder of gay student Matthew Shepard, pleaded guilty earlier this month to felony murder and kidnapping. He has been sentenced to consecutive life sentences.

Had he gone to trial, various media sources report, Henderson could have faced the death penalty.

Standing before Shepard's parents, Henderson apologized for kidnapping their son, pistol-whipping him, lashing him to a fence and leaving him to die on the cold prairie.

"I know what I did was wrong. I'm very sorry for what I did," he told them.

Two other defendants, Aaron McKinney, 21, and his girlfriend, await trial.

Henderson's girlfriend pleaded guilty to charges that she was an accessory after the fact and is awaiting sentencing. McKinney's girlfriend will go on trial in May on an accessory charge.

McKinney, who is charged with first-degree murder, kidnapping and aggravated robbery charges, faces trial in August. He could be sentenced to the death penalty if found guilty.

Compiled by KRISTINE CHATWOOD



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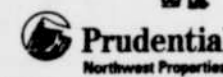
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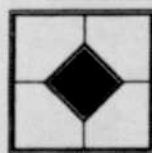


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