

New South Wales NewsNews

Sisters Of Order Of Perpetual Indulgence Respond To NSW Police Deleting ‘Nun’ Photo

STAFF WRITERS February 28, 2022

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The Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney objected to this photo of NSW Police officers posing with a Sister of the Order of Perpetual Indulgence at Mardi Gras Fair Day 2022. Image: Supplied

A week after the **NSW police deleted photos of its officers posing with ‘nuns’ at Mardi Gras Fair Day**, the Order of Perpetual Indulgence has finally broken their silence.

Sr Rowena Keeper of the Holy Doyley, who was tasked with responding to our queries, told *Star Observer* that the Holy Order was surprised by the controversy that erupted over a seemingly innocuous photo shoot.

“Fair Day as a community event is a vibrant colourful occasion that encourages all manner of our diverse rainbow communities to get out, be seen, participate, mingle, catch up with old friends, possibly make new ones, revel and be engaged. And most of all to be accepting of the many differences on display. And that is also highly likely to include members of the OPI also being present on the day. So just like everyone else, we have a right to be there,” said Sr Rowena.

A Photo Bomb Leads To Catholic Outrage



Sisters of the Order of Perpetual Indulgence delivers the opening blessing for Sydney Mardi Gras Fair Day 2022. Image: Supplied.

Sr Rowena revealed the photo with NSW police officers was in fact a photobomb. The NSW police force members were taking group photos near the Fair Day stage, “when my sisterly colleague was inspired to join in the revelry and be part of the picture (I think the modern term is a photobomb!)”

“It all seemed perfectly innocent and harmless fun at the time, no-one from the police force outwardly objected to our presence, a happy snap or two were taken and after our brief meet and greet with our law enforcement officers we cordially parted company,” said Sr Roweena, adding, “I mean after all, what red-blooded gay male nun could resist being in a pic with a man or woman in uniform!?”

Sr Rowena said that after the photoshoot the Sisters did not think about it except for some discussions “about modern-day policing and its part in the LGBTIQ+ community versus where it was many years ago where it was not without occasion of brutality, violence, intimidation and brute force as their primary vehicles of engagement with our community forebears.”

The OPI’s intention was not to “politicise something so innocuous as a photoshoot” but soon the older, sinister prejudices reared their ugly head in the form of the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney vehemently objecting when NSW Police posted the photos on social media.

“In terms of influence, the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney, it seems, still wields plenty in this regard, because the Police were very quick to remove the images that the Archdiocese found offensive. This is disappointing, as it seems prior to the complaint being lodged no-one found it particularly offensive until they were told that it was by the Archdiocese.”



Sisters of the Order of Perpetual Indulgence. Image: Facebook

The OPI also found the coverage of the controversy by the mainstream press disappointing, especially the fact that neither the Order nor the Sister were identified by name.

“Have our fortunes and personal stocks sunk so low as to not be recognised for the community members that we are or is the omission and anonymity deliberate in nature so as to be disempowering?” asked Sr Rowena.

The *Daily Telegraph*’s coverage was not factual, Sr Rowena pointed out, with the tabloid referring to the incident as “police posing at a Mardi Gras event with men jokingly dressed as nuns.”

“While we may use the vehicles of parody, humour, street theatre and pathos as our mediums for trying to get our messaging out, (universal joy, no more stigmatic guilt and the granting of perpetual indulgence) just like the Catholic Church we take our vocation very seriously also. So, this too was a little disappointing that we were diminished in this way,” said Sr Rowena

A Message For The Catholic Church

 **Sisters of the Order of Perpetual Indulgence - Sydney House** 
about a year ago

Kicking off their 40th Anniversary year celebrating forty years of activism and service to the Sydney LGBTQA+ community, the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence make their entrance on to the parade arena at the SCG.
Happy Mardi Gras everyone!
Thanks to Ron Boyde for the photos.



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The Order had a message for the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney. “We too have a message that is all about equality and the ending of discrimination – but for all, not just for some of the community, and that is in our ‘universal joy and no more stigmatic guilt’ tenets. While primarily targeted at the LGBTQI+ community who have suffered so much under the weight of a lack of joy, lack of acceptance and overwhelming dollops of (mostly religiously based) stigmatic guilt, our messaging is designed to include all should they wish to embrace it.”

Sr Rowena pointed to the Archdiocese’s “platitudes that gay and lesbian people should never be marginalised.”

“It is these very same religious institutions, who take such offence to our alleged mockery of them, that are the same ones who influence political outcomes such as plebiscites on same-sex marriage referendums and of course the most recent assault on the LGBTQI+ community being the Religious Discrimination bill. A trojan horse of legislation if ever there was one, designed yet again in creeping subtle ways to turn back the tide to a world that is more acceptable to those who are desperately trying to maintain control of it!”

“In short, if people of faith find a few gay male nuns so offensive as to shake their faith-based belief systems to their very cores and that it upsets them so much, then it would seem that their belief systems are very fragile.”

‘They Have Done Us A Public Service’

 **nswpolice** 
Mardi Gras Fair Day

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nswpolice

Had so much fun at today's #MardiGras2022 #FairDay - thanks for coming down and saying hello!

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Though the needless controversy sullied the Order's otherwise enjoyable time at Fair Day, there was one silver lining.

"We are also grateful to the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney, *The Sydney Daily Telegraph* and the NSW Police force for collectively raising our profile in such a public way and once again in their own special way, tabling and publicising issues that are current and still negatively impacting upon elements of the LGBTQI+ community today. They have done us a great public service in doing this," said Sr Rowena.

"The OPI believe all people, no matter who, or what their sexual orientation or gender identity may be, deserve the freedom to love and be loved in a manner that is mutual, consensual and hopefully satisfying!"

"Dingo Vobiscum!" Sr Rowena signed off.

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[Sister's Note]

In this article Sister Web has corrected the horrendous oversight of the article's writer in spelling Sister Rowena's name incorrectly!