

Father Curran

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general ... I insist that the full meaning of human sexuality involves a permanent commitment of love between a woman and a man ... Only in very rare and comparatively few situations would I justify premarital sexuality ...

4) "I have argued that the Catholic Church should change its teaching on indissolubility and allow divorce in certain circumstances."

Cardinal Ratzinger's letter explains that such dissent from Church teaching — as expressed in such documents as the papal encyclicals *Humanae Vitae* and *Familiaris Consortio* — is in conflict with the principals of assent of faith contained in the Vatican II document *Lumen Gentium*.

In the Sept. 17, 1985, letter, Cardinal Ratzinger told Father Curran that the Congregation was at that time "in a position to bring this inquiry to a conclusion."

The Congregation prefect gave Father Curran two month's time to "reconsider and to retract those positions which violate the conditions necessary for a professor to be

called a Catholic theologian." The cardinal further stated that "It must be recognized that the authorities of the Church cannot allow the present situation to continue in which the inherent contradiction is prolonged that one who is to teach in the name of the Church in fact denies her teaching." The Vatican has not yet announced its decision whether to remove Father Curran's mandate, or authorization, to teach theology in a Catholic university.

In response to the cardinal's letter, Father Curran suggested in December, 1985, that a compromise be settled upon. In his press conference Tuesday, he explained that he had offered "not to teach sexual ethics here at Catholic University in the future ... Also, I expressed my willingness to have the Congregation issue a document pointing out what they judge to be the errors and ambiguities in my theological teaching while still recognizing that I am a Catholic theologian in good standing."

Father Curran continued, saying, "Such an approach was recently taken in the case of another United States theologian. However,

unfortunately from my perspective, Rome was unwilling to accept this compromise." Father Curran said the Vatican position was "clearly a final judgment."

During his press conference, Father Curran cited four points which he has emphasized in his exchange with the Vatican. He reiterated his assertion that "at times it is legitimate for a Roman Catholic to dissent in theory and in practice from noninfallible Church teaching," and noted that in 1968 "more than 600 United States Catholics with expertise in the sacred sciences publicly expressed the right of Catholics in theory and in practice to dissent from the official Church teaching on contraception."

He claimed that it is unjust for the Vatican to single him out for disciplinary action of any type when so many other Catholic theologians hold the same basic position.

Father Curran claimed that "any action taken to prevent the legitimate possibility of dissent from noninfallible teaching by Church authority is ultimately detrimental not only to the good of theology but even to the good of the Church." He noted that at

several points in history, the Church had officially changed its teaching on important issues, and that such changes were brought about by the work of theologians within the Church.

He further asserted that disciplinary action taken against him by Rome violates the academic freedom, autonomy and integrity of Catholic University and other Catholic academic institutions.

Father Curran summarized his remarks by emphasizing that he is "a committed Roman Catholic believer, a Catholic priest and a Catholic theologian ... My positions are neither rebellious nor radical. My posture is neither defiant nor disrespectful. My theological positions represent the mainstream of Catholic theology and are accepted by the majority of Catholic theologians today."

He concluded by saying, "No matter what happens in the future, it is my hope and fervent wish that this whole matter will be an occasion for true growth and development in the Catholic Church which I will continue to love and serve."

Obituaries

Sister Patricia Austin; Northern Cayuga education director

Sister Patricia Austin, SSND, died last Sunday night, March 9, of injuries suffered after her car was hit broadside on Route 34, just south of Cato. She was 66 years old.

The fatal accident occurred when Sister Patricia was returning from a night religious education class at about 9 p.m. and hit an ice patch, causing her to lose control of her vehicle and veer into a car traveling in the opposite direction.

Sister Patricia was director of religious education for the Northern Cayuga Cluster parishes, which include St. John's, Port Byron; St. Joseph's, Weedsport; St. Michael's and St. Patrick's, Cato. Her duties as director of religious education included

the long- and short-range planning of educational programs, the recruiting and training of teacher aides, and the overall supervision of educational duties and responsibilities in all three parishes. She came to the Northern Cayuga area in June, 1985, and helped formed the first pastoral team to serve this new grouping of parish communities.

Sister Patricia was born on March 9, 1920, in Boston, Mass. Her first teaching job was at St. Clement's School in Saratoga Springs, New York. She worked in a broad spectrum of teaching environments, from large urban centers like Baltimore and Philadelphia to lesser-known cities like Glen Cove, Long Island, and Galion, Ohio. In 1972, she was

named pastoral assistant of St. Peter's Parish in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Sister Patricia came to Rochester in 1973 to teach at Holy Redeemer School. In 1975, she left teaching for a year of spiritual renewal, before becoming principal of Holy Family School in Rochester from 1976-78.

From 1978-1982, she worked in St. Mary's and St. Peter's parishes, both located in the Diocese of Albany. Before returning to Rochester and her aforementioned duties, Sister Patricia was religious education coordinator at Infant Jesus Parish in Port Jefferson, N.Y.

Father George Wiant, pastor of St. Joseph's Parish in Weedsport, spoke sol-

emnly of Sister Patricia: "She brought a sense of warmth and feeling to everyone around her. We all feel an emptiness at her loss. We miss her here a great deal."

She is survived by her brother, Albert, of Philadelphia; her sisters, Mary Austin, SSND, of Wilton, Conn.; Ursula (Mrs. John Clancy) of Westwood, Mass.; Joan, living in Boston; and Barbara (McEntee) of Amherst, N.Y.

There will be a memorial service this Saturday, March 15, at 10:30 a.m. at St. Joseph's Church in Weedsport. As of press time, details of a memorial service planned at the SSND motherhouse in Wilton, Conn., were not known.

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