

Authors

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government's Center for Disease Control. The agency was sponsoring a nationwide project to ascertain, through the experiences of various agencies and churches, whether parents could be taught to talk to their children about sex and sexuality.

Once the project ended, the pair continued to offer the workshops on a volunteer basis to local parishes and dioceses around the country.

"The enthusiasm of parents was what led us to make (our help) available to anyone who wanted it," Father Kawiak said. "I think there's a majority of parents who really want this kind of help, who say, 'I want to know this because I want to do it right.'"

They soon realized that they could not begin to meet the demand for such programs as volunteers, and at the same time continue to work at full-time jobs. So they were receptive when Paulist Press approached them in 1982 with the idea of putting their workshop into book form.

Although the book is written for adults, the authors intended it to help children by giving parents the confidence to begin teaching their children about sexuality when they are very young, and to listen to them as they grow older.

"Children by the third or fourth grade already have all the information from the media, television, their peers," Father Kawiak said. "Children are waiting for parents to listen to them, and at an earlier age, to talk to them."

Because the book was intended for the ordinary parent, Father Kawiak and Sullivan said they tried to balance a realistic and practical approach with a positive, faithful presentation of the Church's teaching.

"We were trying to find the middle ground or to come as close as we could," Sullivan said. "That's why the imprimatur was important."

Although it was not required on the book, Sullivan and Father Kawiak sought an im-

primatur on the advice of their publisher.

"We know and the publisher knew that a risk was being taken," he said. "From their (the publishers') perspective, that would give it more validity?"

When the book was released in November, 1985, most reaction was positive, according to Sullivan. "I think people found it very helpful. The reviews we got were 99 percent positive," she said.

"I think the greatest review that ever came out was that this book is not judgmental," Father Kawiak added. "I think people were glad someone took the risk."

Not all parents agreed with their approach, either in the book or in the workshops. "With anything you say or do on a subject like this, there is always going to be some detraction," Sullivan said.

When she first began to notice a conservative trend within the Church's magisterium about two years ago, Sullivan recalled wondering whether their book would ever come under scrutiny, and then dismissing the possibility. "I thought the book was too insignificant," she said.

She was more surprised than shocked when Father Kevin McKenna, diocesan vice chancellor, informed the authors two weeks ago that Bishop Clark had received a letter from Rome instructing him to withdraw his imprimatur from "Parents Talk Love."

Sullivan and Father Kawiak met with Bishop Clark last Tuesday when he returned from the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' meeting in Washington. At the meeting, they assured the bishop that they had gone through proper channels to obtain the imprimatur.

"There really wasn't a lot to say about it," Sullivan said. "We tried to reassure him that we knew he didn't have any options and that we didn't see this as a personal affront — that this is just the atmosphere of our times. He let us know that he would be as supportive as he could be."

Neither believes that the withdrawal of the imprimatur will greatly affect their book or



Jeff Goulding/Courier-Journal
Father Matthew A. Kawiak and Susan K. Sullivan, authors of "Parents Talk Love."

their own lives and ministries. Sullivan does not currently teach in the area of sex education. The pair hasn't offered a workshop since 1984. And Father Kawiak's work now focuses primarily on individual counseling.

Even without the imprimatur, Sullivan and Father Kawiak believe the book has value for parents.

"It's like any other resource," Father Kawiak said. "It's there, and from it you have to make

your own judgments of what to use or not use. I stand by it 100 percent.

"My greatest fear is that parents will be afraid to say anything to their children," he added. "The worst risk we face today is fear, and then silence, which leads to alienation. . . . It's awfully difficult to bring up a child today. I think that all of us have to take some risks to help them grow. I think that in the future, today's children will appreciate us for doing that."

Vatican finds

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In the preface to "Parents Talk Love," the authors wrote: "Our intention is to help parents create an environment which encourages

open and honest communications about sexuality and enriches the relationship between parents and their children. . . . The goal of this book is an extensive selection of read-and-discuss questions designed to give parents the opportunity to prepare themselves to handle discussion of sexuality with their children; and we shall strive to deal very directly and truthfully, with the more difficult topics such as masturbation, intercourse, contraception and venereal disease."

This the authors proceeded to do in 164 pages of information and advice for parents who are struggling to cope with the physical, emotional, moral and verbal aspects of teaching their children about sex and sexuality.

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith praised the book for its section on sexual myths, its quiz on reproduction, its discussion of the role television plays in misleading children about sex and its focus on developmental psychology. But it listed the following "points of confusion and points in open contrast with the Church's moral doctrine":

- devaluation of the Church's teaching prior to Vatican Council II and a failure to discuss Church teaching that the procreative and unitive functions of sexuality are not to be separated;
- failure to stress the importance of sacramental marriage as a condition for the legitimate sexual expression of love;
- "dissent" from the Church's teaching on contraception;
- implication that Church teaching on homosexuality is subject to change and is historically conditioned;
- "ambiguity" on the presentation of Church teaching on masturbation;
- "sympathetic presentation of the pro-abortion viewpoint;" and
- failure to discuss "prayer, asceticism, sacramental practice, sin or repentance, or the need for the follower of Christ to deny himself."

Thus, the Congregation wrote of the book, "While citing amply the Church's magisterium, it ultimately does not serve it and in some respects opposes it. As such, it does not deserve the endorsement of the Church's imprimatur."

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On sexuality and the 'imprimatur'

By Father Kevin McKenna
Vice Chancellor

The revised Code of Canon Law (1983) continues a traditional discipline of the Church, which requires a review by the proper Church authorities of certain categories of religious printed works. This "imprimatur" ("let it be printed") when granted by a bishop normally signifies that the contents of a particular book are not in conflict with the Church's teaching on faith and morals. When granted, this approbation does not imply that the authority granting the imprimatur agrees necessarily with the contents, opinions or statements expressed.

The present legislation found in the new Code of Canon Law is based on a decree of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith of March, 1975. The decree lists certain categories of books that require prior approval: catechisms and other writings that deal with catechetical formation; books that deal with questions of sacred scripture, theology, canon law, Church history; or those that deal with religious or moral disciplines and are to be used as a textbook for religious instruction (elementary, secondary or college level). Canon 827 par. 3 of the Code of Canon Law encourages but does not mandate writers of works dealing with these topics to submit their works for review. The authors of "Parents Talk Love" sought the imprimatur in terms of the recommendation of canon 827 par. 3, since this work was not intended as a textbook for religious in-

struction, and therefore was not technically in need of an official Church approbation.

Bishop Clark, in removing his imprimatur from this book, has asked that mention be made of the recent magisterial teachings in the area of sexual ethics where the Congregation has indicated the existence of possible confusion.

Contraception

Pope John Paul II in the apostolic exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (Community of the Family) stressed the Church's mission of presenting sexuality as a value and task of the whole person, created in the image of God. Reaffirming the teaching of his predecessor, Paul VI, the pope renewed the teaching of the Church that there exists an "inseparable connection which by God and unable to be broken by man in his own initiative between the two meanings of the conjugal act: the unitive meaning and the procreative meaning which are both inherent to the marriage act (*Humanae Vitae*, 12; *Familiaris Consortio*, 32). Pope Paul VI taught that with these essential qualities (unitive and procreative), marriage would fully retain its sense of "true mutual love and its ordination to the supreme responsibility of parenthood (*Humanae Vitae*, 12).

Homosexuality

Homosexuality was one of several topics addressed by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in its "Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics" issued in 1975. The document

stated: "According to the objective moral order, homosexual relations are acts which lack an essential and indispensable finality" (no. 8). Relying on scriptural evidence, the document went on to add that the judgment of scripture does not permit the conclusion "that all those who suffer from this anomaly are personally responsible for it, but it does attest to the fact that homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered and can in no case be approved of" (no. 8).

Masturbation

This same document ("Declaration on Sexual Ethics") pointed out how psychology and sociology have recently suggested that masturbation is a normal phenomenon of sexual development with little moral import. "This opinion is contradictory to the teaching and pastoral practice of the Church," the Congregation stated. "Whatever the force of certain arguments of a biological and philosophical nature, which have sometimes been used by theologians, in fact, both the Magisterium of the Church — in the course of a constant tradition — and the moral sense of the faithful have declared without hesitation that masturbation is an intrinsically and seriously disordered act. The main reason is that, whatever the motive for acting in this way, the deliberate use of the sexual faculty outside normal conjugal relations essentially contradicts the finality of the faculty" (no. 9).

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