

Vatican finds

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Because the book is not a catechetical text and is directed to parents rather than to children, canon law did not require that "Parents Talk Love" receive an imprimatur in order to be published (see Father Kevin McKenna's article on page 7). Yet Don Brophy, managing editor of Paulist Press, said he encouraged the authors to seek official Church approbation because "all these issues dealing with sexuality and sex education in the Catholic Church have been very touchy for a number of years. As publishers, we don't feel we can issue a book on this kind of subject without the approval of the bishop through the imprimatur. "We felt that if we had the bishop's approval, then the Church stood behind us on it," Brophy added.

Before an imprimatur is granted to a religious publication, it must first be examined by a theological specialist appointed to serve as a Church censor and be declared "nihil obstat" ("without obstacle"). In the case of "Parents Talk Love," the censor was Monsignor William H. Shannon, a member of the Theological Commission of the Diocese of Rochester and a retired professor of theology at Nazareth College.

In a written statement, Monsignor Shannon said that "in reading the typescript of 'Parents Talk Love,' (I) came to see that the authors were at times expressing disagreement with certain teachings of the ordinary magisterium of the Church and were attempting to handle the pastoral issues such disagreement might involve for parents."

Monsignor Shannon defined his role as censor of the book as evaluating "whether or not the contents of the book are in conflict with faith and morals as taught by the magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church. It is not the function of the censor to act as a critical reviewer of the book. In fact, he may disagree with some of the contents. It is the sole task of the censor to assure the bishop (that) the book is free from error in matters of faith and morals. On the basis of (this) report, the bishop would then make his decision to grant or to deny an imprimatur."

Evaluating the authors' disagreements with the ordinary magisterium in light of the traditional theology on dissent and guidelines of the U.S. bishops, Monsignor Shannon "assumed that disagreement with non-infallible magisterial teachings did not of itself constitute an obstacle to the granting of an imprimatur, as long as these magisterial teachings were adequately set forth in the book," his statement explained.

Yet, Monsignor Shannon wrote, his concept of the meaning of "imprimatur" at the time he certified the book is much different from the direction the Vatican has been taking recently.

"Since the time the imprimatur was granted, the . . . judgment of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith regarding certain teachings in the writings of Father Charles Curran makes it clear that the Congregation would not expect an imprimatur to be given to a book that in any way expressed disagreement with the teachings of the magisterium. It now seems clear that complete agreement with magisterial teaching is a necessary condition for granting an imprimatur; and

moreover, that an imprimatur may not be given to a book that presents adverse criticism of the effects that past magisterial teachings are said to have had on the lives of the faithful," the statement continues.

"Had I known what has now become common information through the 'Curran case,' the imprimatur would not have been recommended," he concluded.

Despite the controversy it may engender, Brophy does not expect the removal of the imprimatur to have much effect on sales of "Parents Talk Love." The book, he said, is not a

best-seller; fewer than 5,000 copies have been sold since its release.

Nor does he expect Paulist Press to take any action beyond removing the imprimatur when further copies are printed — unless such action is specifically requested by Bishop Clark.

"We'll comply with whatever the Church authorities want," he said, noting that — he the exception of "Christ Among Us" — he could recall no cases in which a book had actually been recalled by its publisher because of the removal of an imprimatur.

presenting these before these bodies.

"If we change nothing, I think this day has helped me to put into focus the whole process available to me for consultation," he added.

Whether or not any structural changes result, communication between diocesan councils should be improved, according to members of at least one of the small groups that met in between Saturday's presentations. They suggested that councils should share minutes and agendas, use liaison members more effectively, and schedule more frequent joint meetings.

A preliminary look at the meeting's evaluations showed that of 49 respondents, 35 people favored further study of the possibilities of a joint council, five opposed it and nine had no opinion.

The Joint Executive Committee of the three councils is expected to meet next month to take a closer look at the evaluations and to identify the next step in studying possible changes in the structure of diocesan consultation.

Council

Continued from Page 3

ods of growth and stagnation. But Kollar warned that simply having fewer meetings would not give life to the consultative process.

"It is too simple to say 'The bishop doesn't ask us to do anything . . . None of these three groups can ever function effectively if their first question is 'Bishop, what do you want us to do?'" she said.

In response to Saturday's presentations, Bishop Clark spoke of a growing conviction that the local Church needs to look back at its accomplishments since Vatican II, to survey its present and future needs, and to develop some basic principles on which to base "some bold moves and difficult choices" in the near future.

"We have some major issues before us," he said. "I look forward almost immediately to



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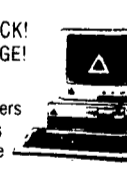
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