

Vatican letters

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Father Kawiak said he is stung by the thought that what he regards as diligent efforts to offer meaningful homilies have generated complaints.

"One of the things I enjoy about my priesthood the most is the writing of children's stories and sharing the message of God with them," he said. "To me, the most important work a parish priest can offer to his people is his preaching."

Father Thomas P. Mull, director of the diocesan Office of Liturgy, said that, personally, he regards what Father Kawiak was doing in the photograph as falling within the guidelines expressed by the "Directory for Masses with Children," prepared and approved in 1973 by the Vatican Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship.

"The guidelines allow, number one, for a homily to be brought down to children's level," Father Mull said. "It was good homiletic form to make use of a personal experience. The object, which is simply used as an example, wasn't the point of the homily ... Personally, I would say it was a good tool."

On the other hand, Father Mull termed the

Vatican congregation's letter as "a routine type of thing."

"It wasn't a pointed thing — that this was wrong or that you shouldn't be doing it," he explained. "When (the congregation) has things brought to their attention, they simply bring those to the attention of the bishop."

Neither Father Mull or Father Kevin McKenna, the diocesan vice chancellor who responded to the letter regarding *Parents Talk Love*, believes that the letters from the two Vatican congregations were related.

On the other hand, Father Mull could not offer any explanation for why the photograph of Father Kawiak's was singled out for Vatican attention, since similar children's celebrations are fairly routine throughout the diocese, particularly during the Christmas season.

"That will probably remain one of the eternal mysteries," Father Mull said. "None of (what prompted the Vatican letter) is cited in the letter."

More than a year ago, members of a local chapter of Catholics United for the Faith (CUF), sent a copy of *Parents Talk Love* to the Vatican's Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, along with a formal complaint about its contents. Vatican officials notified Bishop Clark in October that they found the doctrinal content of parts of the book "defective," particularly on such

topics as homosexuality, contraception and masturbation, and asked that he remove his imprimatur.

Michael Macaluso, a spokesman for the CUF chapter, said the group has done nothing further in regard to the book or Father Kawiak. "It seems to me whatever has happened, (Father Kawiak) has brought on himself," Macaluso said.

But Sullivan speculated that both Vatican letters were prompted by similar types of people, whom she calls "anti's."

"There are a very small number of people who channel a tremendous amount of energy into doing negative things, wanting to erase things," she said. "I think all the people who read the book and liked it are spending their energy doing good, positive things ... The 'anti's' are always the most effective."

Sullivan said she has also been frustrated by a lack of openness on the part of Church officials in Rochester and in Rome. "It annoys me the way things are done. Nothing is done on the up-and-up," she said. As an example, she observed that the diocese received the letter concerning *Parents Talk Love* in March, but that Father Kawiak was not notified by Father McKenna until May, and she was never notified directly at all.

In response, Father McKenna said there was no real reason for the holdup other than possible delays in receiving correspondence

and the fact that he needed to deal with more pressing matters.

Beyond the immediate fate of the book, Sullivan and Father Kawiak are both concerned that the Vatican's actions will discourage others from writing and teaching in the much-needed area of sexual morality.

"I really feel sad that this makes so many other people afraid. So much less will be done for kids and for families," Sullivan said.

"I wonder why the letters in the first place? What is the fear?" Father Kawiak added. "We have really struggled with this, because we know the struggle of parents to deal with these issues ... I feel the people who are going to be hurt the most are the children, and those are the people I love the most."

Benefit wine-tasting planned

More than 250 wines and champagnes from around the world will be available for sampling at St. Mary's 11th annual wine tasting party in the Otto A. Shults Center of Nazareth College on Friday, June 12, from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Tickets are available at \$15 per person, and must be purchased in advance by calling the Volunteer Center of St. Mary's at (716) 464-3255 between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. Tickets are limited and will not be sold at the door.

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