

Vatican reforms tighten controls over bank

By John Thavis
NC News

VATICAN CITY — The Vatican unveiled a major reform of the Vatican bank, which is expected to lead to the departure of its current president, U.S. Archbishop Paul Marcinkus.

The changes will introduce several levels of control over the bank's operations, making it more directly accountable to an existing commission of five cardinals and a new council of five banking experts, the Vatican said in a statement March 9.

Archbishop Marcinkus, who has headed the bank since 1970, said he would help implement the transition and then make a decision about his future.

Asked if he would leave the bank, the archbishop said: "Not necessarily. But if there's no more presidency of the kind I hold, why hang around?"

The 67-year-old archbishop is in line to become head of the Pontifical Commission for the Vatican City-State.

The new statutes foresee closer, continual supervision of the bank's operations, something a number of churchmen have been calling for since 1982, when the Vatican bank became involved in an Italian banking scandal. Known officially as the Institute for the Works of Religion, the bank serves primarily the Holy See and religious orders and organizations.

Under the bank's new statutes, the existing commission of five cardinals will name

a secretary — specified as a priest but not a bishop — who will closely follow the bank's operations.

In addition, the commission will name a supervisory council made up of "five experts in economic and financial activities, selected from various countries," the statement said.

The supervisory council will, in turn, name a director and vice director to carry out the actual bank management. The management team will be approved by the cardinals' commission.

The new statutes also foresee the appointment of three inspectors or auditors, who would respond directly to the supervisory council.

The statement said the statutes would "profoundly modify the structure" of the bank, which has been operating under by-laws that date to its reorganization in 1942.

Archbishop Marcinkus has "indicated

his willingness" to help in the transition phase, the statement said. It did not specify how long the transition would last, but Vatican sources said it might take months before the statutes are finalized.

Archbishop Marcinkus said in an interview that he "wanted to help out with implementing this, setting up the new system."

He called the changes "radical" but said that "there are a lot of things we suggested a long time ago that I'm happy to see."

The archbishop said he "might be involved in picking the people who will come in" to the bank's management.

As for his own future, the archbishop said: "I have no idea what will happen after the transition. I have no plans for the future — I'll see what they have in mind." But he indicated he would leave if, as is expected, the current office of bank president is eliminated.

Theology congress opts not to publish document

By John Thavis
NC News

VATICAN CITY — Organizers of a controversial theological congress on "Morality and Medicine" have canceled plans to publish papers from the meeting after the Vatican said it would be "inopportune" to do so.

The four-day congress, held in April 1988, included theological questioning of the church's ban on "in vitro" fertilization and debate about the Vatican's approach to other medical and sexual issues.

Vatican press spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls said Feb. 23 that the Congregation for Catholic Education took the action in December after reviewing the "acts," or formal interventions, of the congress. The documents had been forwarded to the congregation by the meeting's organizers, officials of the Redemptorist order's Alphonsonian Academy of Moral Theology in Rome.

"Keeping in mind the content of the acts, the congregation said it would be better not to publish them," Navarro-Valls said. He said a letter expressing the decision, dated Dec. 28, was signed by the congregation secretary, Archbishop Jose Saraiva Martins.

Navarro-Valls said he would not characterize the Vatican's action as censorship, but rather as a response to a specific request for advice.

Theological congresses are common in Rome, and their collected interventions are normally published in book form without prior Vatican review.

The dean of Alphonsonian Academy, Redemptorist Father Louis Vereecke, said Feb. 23 that the academy had forwarded the documents to the Vatican for reasons of "prudence" after it became clear that the Vatican was sensitive to the issues under

discussion.

Father Vereecke said that just before the congress began, three unscheduled speakers were added to the program at the Vatican's specific request. Those speakers strongly defended the church's teaching on the moral issues that came up for discussion.

"Our intent was to publish the acts. We sent them to the congregation for prudence's sake, because the congress itself had stirred up strong controversy," Father Vereecke said.

The education congregation said publication would be "inopportune," Father Vereecke said. He added that the congregation had made no direct criticism or judgment on the content of the speeches and papers and that each participant was free to publish his paper individually.

"The doctrinal content was not in question," he said.

One of the participants, Father Klaus Demmer, a Rome theologian, called the education congregation's decision "unfortunate." He said his speech had been returned to him with a letter from congress organizers explaining the congregation's action.

"It's a very delicate and unpleasant matter," Father Demmer said Feb. 22.

The congress covered a variety of moral-medical issues, including fertility and conception, genetic technology and human embryo experimentation. Speakers included theologians and professionals in scientific fields.

One of the participants, Redemptorist Father Bernard Haring, told National Catholic News Service during the congress that the arguments of theologians opposed to any form of "in vitro" fertilization "do not convince me or other people."

Suggestive rock video prompts Pepsi to withdraw commercial

By Sister Mary Ann Walsh
NC News

WASHINGTON — Following MTV's broadcast of Madonna's new rock video "Like a Prayer," Pepsi-Cola removed from the music video network a new commercial featuring the rock singer. The video is filled with sexual imagery and features the singer dancing in a church.



The video showed the singer, who frequently wears religious jewelry, singing in a Gospel choir, caressing a statue and developing the "stigmata," or bloody wounds resembling those of the crucified Christ.

It also featured a field of burning crosses

and a black religious figure falsely imprisoned for assault.

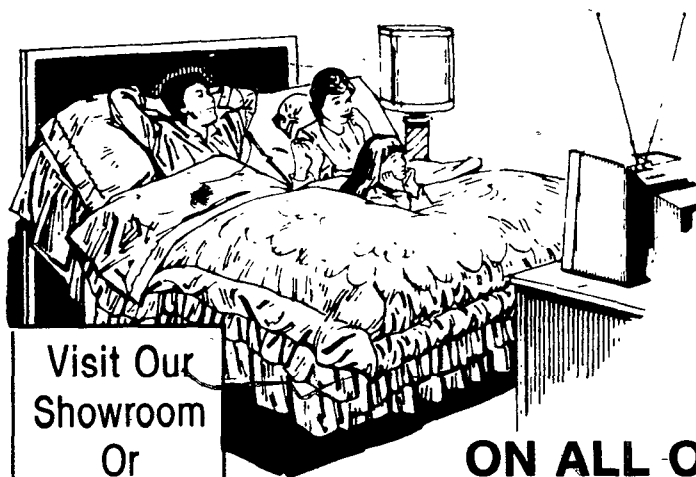
Pepsi pulled the commercial "as of now," Carole Robinson, MTV director of program publicity, said March 6. Pepsi is continuing to place other ads on the network, however, Robinson said.

The Madonna video premiered on MTV March 3, the day after Pepsi launched its new commercial titled "Make a Wish." The commercial was part of a yearlong program of ads and tour sponsorship for which Madonna was to receive a reported \$5 million.

The Pepsi ad, which first appeared in a two-minute version during NBC-TV's "The Cosby Show," showed Madonna trading places with a little girl celebrating her birthday. In it, after switching roles with the child, Madonna revisits her Catholic girls' school and the child wanders through the star's home.

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