

# Pre-Cana book draws ire of parish team members

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — The pre-Cana team at St. Thomas the Apostle Parish is protesting the diocese's choice of a marriage-preparatory manual to be used in pre-Cana sessions throughout the diocese.

The manual — originally written for the Archdiocese of Kansas City, Mo. — contains sections on communications, sexuality and family planning that are unacceptable to the St. Thomas team, which also questions the use of "covenants," or questionnaires to be filled out by engaged couples at the end of each section of the book.

The diocese is already revising the manual, entitled *When Families Marry*, in response to some of the concerns pre-Cana teams have raised about its content, according to Maurice Tierney, associate director of the Diocesan Office of Social Ministry.

The booklet was written by Tara M. Markey and Finian N. Meis, two marriage and family directors from the Archdiocese of Kansas City, where the manual has been used for the past 12 years. Twenty other U.S. dioceses are also using the manual, according to Dennis Fischer, assistant to his wife, Shari Fischer, regional coordinator of the diocesan Marriage Preparation and Family Ministry.

Despite its widespread use, *When Families Marry* won't be used at St. Thomas the Apostle no matter what revisions are made, according to Marcy Gabello, leader of the pre-Cana team.

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Gabello said the manual's overall tone is too negative for engaged couples. "We need to show both sides of marriage," Gabello said. "However, these couples come to us with stars in their eyes, and you're not going to remove the stars."

Engaged couples would be disillusioned, Gabello said, by the manual's emphasis on exploring potential conflicts that could arise after a couple is married. For example, the booklet's communications section ends with a covenant that lists a series of statements indicative of individual family

attitudes towards communication. Prospective spouses couple must answer "yes" if they think the statement reflects their family life, or "no" if it doesn't.

But this is asking couples to accentuate the negative, rather than the positive, according to Gabello. "You have to educate them in a positive constructive manner," she said, noting that no manual could have prepared her and her husband for their marital conflicts.

Dennis Fischer, on the other hand, disagrees with allowing couples to enter marriage "starry-eyed." "We're calling them to an adult, mature level of love," he said. "They're not just marrying each other — they're marrying (each others') families."

Fischer cited statistics showing that 50 percent of all American marriages end in divorce. Couples need to confront serious issues before they are married, he said, or they may wake up after the honeymoon only to find they really don't know each other.

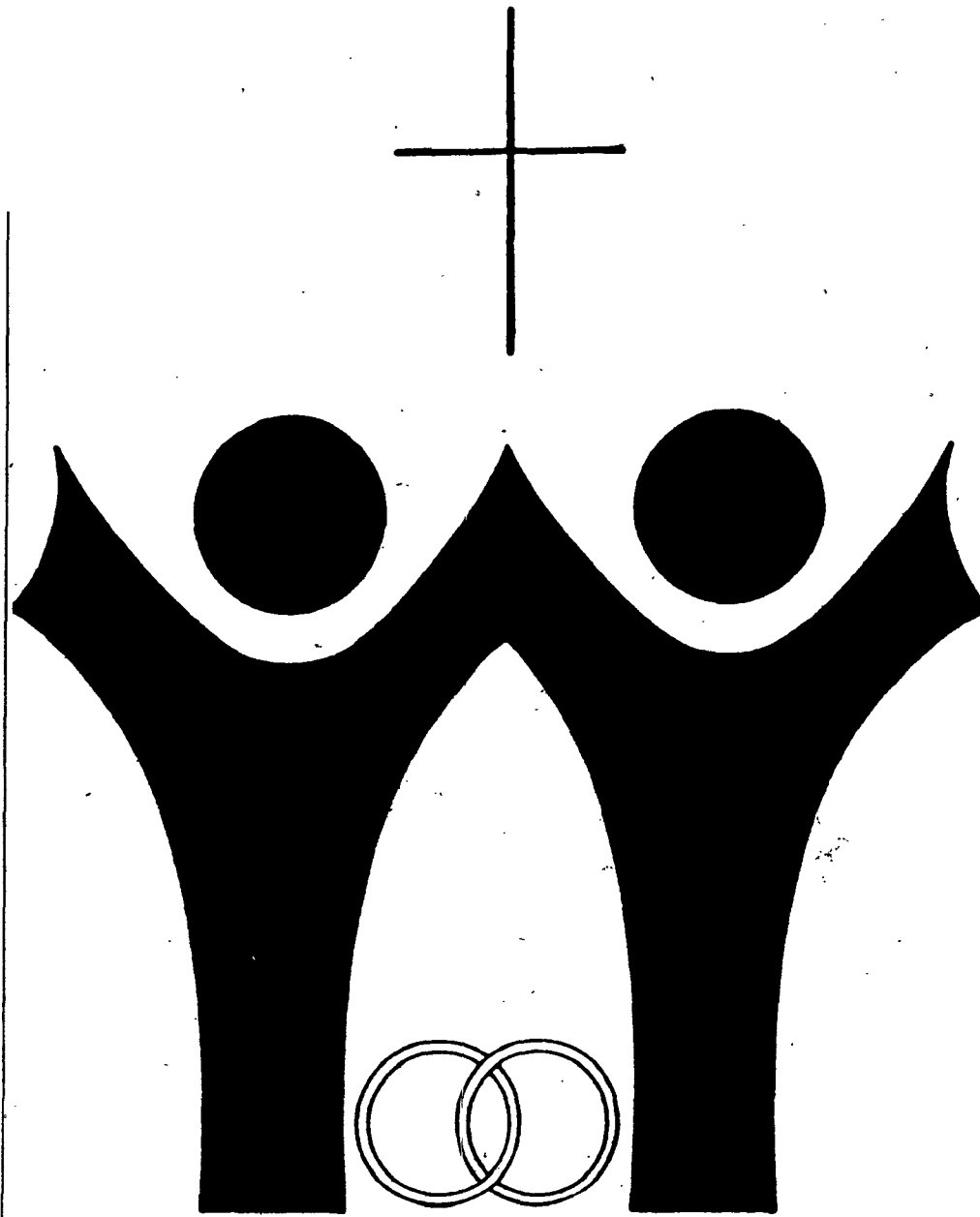
What a couple does on that honeymoon should be something they learn on their own, not in a pre-Cana session, according to Eileen Rousch, a member of St. Thomas the Apostle's pre-Cana team. The manual's section on sexuality, which explains foreplay and intercourse, is too explicit and unnecessary, she said.

"We're not there to teach them to make love," Rousch said, remarking that the section might cause couples to compare their own lovemaking unfavorably with what is described in the book.

But pre-Cana teams should teach couples how to make love, in an all-encompassing sense of the phrase, Fischer said. "Lovemaking is not simply sexual intercourse," he said, noting, "it's many kinds of things, not just something that happens in the bedroom."

The Fischers "don't profess to give (couples) a plumbing section" on lovemaking, he said, noting they always tell couples that they should create their own style.

Catholic couples might also create their own style of family planning after reading the manual, Rousch remarked. The family-planning section describes various methods of birth control, including natural family planning, the pill and abortion. By discuss-



ing options other than natural family planning, the manual is handing couples "a loaded gun," Rousch said.

Shari Fischer said the manual follows the example set forth by Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, which also discusses various forms of birth control so as to ultimately come down on the side of natural family planning. Catholics need to be fully aware of all the available options so that they can see the wisdom in natural family planning, the Fischers assert.

Tierney said the booklet's family-planning section will be revised and used as an appendix to the manual, rather than appearing as a separate section. Fischer said it would now function more like "a glossary of terms."

Nonetheless, the St. Thomas the Apostle

group is still opposed to the manual's use and has sent letters to Bishop Matthew H. Clark, the Fischers, and Archbishop Pio Laghi, apostolic nuncio to the United States. To date, none of the recipients have responded to the pre-Cana's team's letters.

The Fischers claimed that the St. Thomas group had its chance to criticize the manual when they attended an orientation session in April, which Shari Fischer hosted. But the four St. Thomas representatives left the three-hour session two hours early, Fischer said, long before their questions could be answered.

Gabello said the team had a pertinent reason to leave — one of its members, Mary Jo Maurer, was nine-months pregnant and felt like she was going into labor.

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# Bishop solicits pastoral council's input on diocesan synod plans

By Lee Strong  
Staff writer

The Diocese of Rochester is apparently heading towards a diocesan synod within the next few years.

That was the message Bishop Matthew H. Clark conveyed to the members of the Diocesan Pastoral Council at their May 20 meeting held at St. Andrew's Parish, Dundee.

At the same meeting, Father John Mulligan, moderator of the pastoral office, announced that Bishop Clark had approved the diocesan budget on May 17, and that overall spending would increase approximately six percent during fiscal year 1989/90. Father Paul Tomasso also apprised DPC members of the Commitment to Ministry process' progress in examining parishes' current and future staffing needs and options.

In discussing the diocesan synod, Bishop Clark briefly outlined the history of the plan. He noted that he had raised the subject with the Priests' Council three years ago, but that at the time that body recommended strengthening consultative bodies instead. Bishop Clark said that strengthening had taken place, but "has not been sufficiently fruitful to deal with issues facing the church."

Bishop Clark said a committee of the Priests' Council has examined the synod question during the past year, and recommended that diocese hold a synod to "ad-

dress the issue of unified diocesan pastoral planning." The Priests' Council unanimously approved the recommendation at its May 2 meeting.

The goal of the synod, Bishop Clark explained, is help make decisions and establish directions for the diocese in the coming years. He noted that the last diocesan synod was held in 1954 and had involved only priests making decisions about issues affecting their priestly ministry. The proposed synod will be a grass-roots effort, involving a cross-section of the entire diocese, he said.

Among the issues facing the diocese — and which the synod might address — are schools, upgrading catechetical leadership, the diocesan mission statement and ministerial planning. Bishop Clark said the synod would also give people of the diocese a chance to talk "about needs close to their hearts" that perhaps are not being currently addressed.

The synod is still in the talking stage at this point, Bishop Clark said, adding that he would gather a group of people together over the summer to discuss it. He also requested that DPC members consider the synod over the summer and report back at their September meeting any questions and concerns they might have. He posed six questions to guide them in their deliberations.

The bishop said an ongoing oversight committee will have to be created to direct

the process, including deciding which issues should be addressed and forming subcommittees to deal with these issues. He added that the work of the synod will take into account work being done by other groups and processes — such as Commitment to Ministry — so that efforts will not be duplicated.

Much as is done with statements being written by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, the synod's final documents will have gone through a long process of writing and revision. Bishop Clark suggested that 1993, the 125th anniversary of the diocese, might be an appropriate time to culminate the process with a general meeting to vote on the documents.

Pastoral council members reacted positively to the idea of a synod. Angela Palmieri, who represents ministry to handicapped, pointed out that with the Commitment to Ministry Process scheduled for completion in 1990, the synod would be a natural way to follow up the results of the process.

Deacon representative Edward Sergeant echoed Palmieri's suggestion, adding that the synod would also provide the people of the diocese with an opportunity to express their "oneness." "I don't think we get a strong sense of collegiality," he said. "This will help us."

"To gather as a local church is in itself an unpredictable but an inevitably good

experience," Bishop Clark concluded, predicting that such an effort would be "a transforming experience."

In his report on the diocesan budget, Father Mulligan explained that the new budget was produced in the midst of an ongoing effort to revise the diocese's budgeting process. A budget revision committee has been meeting since November, 1988, to streamline the procedure, reducing the number of separate budgets from more than 400 to approximately 100. Departments and divisions were also required to prioritize their programs.

A 10-member budget committee, which is a subcommittee of the Diocesan Finance Council, reviewed the budgets and submitted an overall budget to the finance council. The finance council then submitted the budget to Bishop Clark for final approval.

Father Mulligan said that the budget — which should be ready for public release this week — has the lowest percentage increase in six to seven years. The new development office and the Division of Education received the most substantial increases, while the divisions of Urban Ministry, Support Ministries and Bishop's Ministries received increases of less than six percent.

The budget committee will meet May 30 to evaluate the overall process. Father Mulligan said future revisions of the

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