Dissent

Continued from page 1

Writing in the July edition of L'Osservatore Romano, the Vatican's official newspaper, the cardinal argued that by injecting majority politics into theology, "theology fails to live up to its nature. It becomes a political factor; it organizes itself into structures of power and follows the political model of the majority.

By separating itself from the magisterium, (theology) loses the ground from under its feet, ... and by passing from the sphere of thought to that of the power play it falsifies its scientific nature as well. so that it lacks both foundations of its existence.'

But Father McBrien argued that if anyone is making a power play, it is Cardinal Ratzinger and Vatican officials. "They don't like to be criticized," the priest said. "They're like the rulers of Bulgaria and Romania before Gorbachev

... They regard any act of criticism as an act of dislovalty.'

One of Father McBrien's colleagues at Notre Dame said the Vatican instruction seemed to disallow any confusion over church teaching. "Confusion is sort of treated as the ultimate sin against the Holy Spirit," said Father Richard A. McCormick, a university professor of Christian ethics.

Much of the confusion in today's church surrounds Humanae Vitae, Pope Paul VI's 1968 encyclical condemning the use of artificial birth control. Such confusion could have been avoided altogether, Grisez said. if the Holy Father had stressed from the start that the encyclical's teachings were

Since he did not, theologians more than 20 years later still argue about the encyclical, which received wide criticism because it was issued after a Vaticanappointed commission recommended the church re-examine its longstanding prohibition of artificial birth control.

Pope John Paul II has repeatedly reiterated the message of Humanae Vitae, and some theologians speculate that Cardinal Ratzinger's instruction is actually a prelude to a forthcoming papal announcement that the 1968 encyclical is infallible. The pope has already announced plans to issue an encyclical on moral questions.

And this is where the instruction may affect the person in the pew.

Twenty German theologians, including Fathers Hans Kung and Edward Schillebeekcx, recently issued a statement asking the pope to "give up the idea of an encyclical on moral questions that are in dispute as long as a precise clarification has not been achieved of the theological questions linked with these."

The theologians also requested that a commission be set up to examine "the question of papal infallibility in the context of the teaching on birth control."

Some conservative theologians argue that Humanae Vitae already could be considered an infallible teaching since infallibility, strictly speaking, defines a true article of faith that existed beforehand.

"(F)ormal definings are viewed as actions which clarified a particular dogma and its place in the deposit of faith, not as actions which gave birth to something which previously did not exist" (The Catholic Fact Book, by John Deedy, 1986, Thomas More Press).

But Pope Paul VI did not specifically invoke his encyclical as infallible. The conditions of papal infallibility say the pope must pronounce himself on a matter of faith or morals, speak as the vicar of Christ to the universal church, and clearly state his intent to speak ex cathedra, from the "chair of Peter."

Monsignor Smith scoffed at the argument that theologians can dissent on church statements that have not been defined ex cathedra. "It's a false dissent to say, 'Show me where it's infallibly defined or otherwise it's up for grabs," he com-

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Other theologians argue, however, that the church has made mistakes in the past such as opposing religious freedom — and that the church can make mistakes in the

Father Sebastian A. Falcone, president of St. Bernard's Institute in Rochester, pointed out that the church in its Vatican II documents expounded on a "hierarchy of

"Not everything taught is of equal importance," he said, noting that the essential truths of the faith include the existence of God, revelation, and the centrality of Christ in the seven sacraments.

What the argument currently raging comes down to is the centuries-old conflict between a conservative interpretation of the Word of God and a liberal approach to the Gospel.

As Father Falcone said, "I think it's the interpretation of interpretation that's at issue here."

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Hibernians

Continued from page 3

organization if his opinion goes against the teachings of the church."

While the Knights debate whether to exclude pro-choice members from their ranks, the AOH will continue to fight abortion by participating in protests, rallies, lectures and other activities in support of pro-life. Welsh said.

Tom Corcoran, district director of the Elmira AOH, said that the pro-life committee is the biggest one for the AOH on the local, state and national levels. Members donate much of their time and money in support of the pro-life agenda, Corcoran said.

"Even though the abortion issue may not be a big issue right now in Elmira, for instance, it still is the most important issue for the Elmira Hibernians," he said.

President Clough said the resolution's unanimous passage speaks for itself. "We are pro-life, and we plan to continue to support it."

In accordance with AOH priorities, the Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians recently formed a national pro-life office and plan to pass a similar pro-life resolution soon, according to Welsh.

CLASSIFIEDS

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