

# CATHOLIC COURIER

DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER, N.Y.

Vol. 103 No. 5

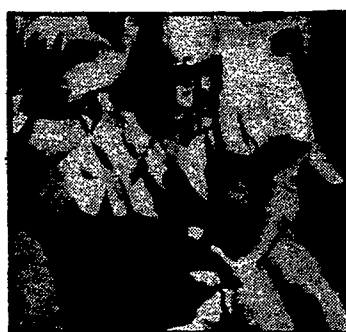
Thursday, October 31, 1991

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20 pages

## Sectional play begins

As high school football's regular season winds down, sectional play in soccer is heating up. Pages 12 and 13.



## Can society survive the 'X' rating?

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

**T**he letter "X" has an uncanny ability to unite two divergent factions — secular feminists and born-again Christians.

Beginning in the late 1960s, the most common use for the alphabet's 24th letter has become the designation of pornographic films.

Since that time, one has needed only to mention the word "pornography" to forge an alliance between members of conservative Christian churches and feminists belonging to such groups as the National Organization for Women.

Activists in both camps respond with skepticism — and even disgust — to efforts to legitimize sexually explicit materials, which they consider dehumanizing to men, women and children.

"There is strong concern within NOW about the evidence of links between violent and degrading pornography, and the incidence of rape and assaults against women and children," the feminist organization stated in July of this year.

NOW's statement sounds remarkably similar to positions taken by the American Family Association, a Christian organization based in Tupelo, Miss. Indeed, for \$25 AFA sells billboard-sized posters proclaiming: "Pornography victimizes women and children."

Catholic leaders, too, have joined the chorus.

"We are in unanimous agreement that hard-core and child pornography, which are not protected by the Constitution, are evils that must be eliminated," states the manifesto of the Religious Alliance Against Pornography, a nationwide ecumenical organization whose members include five U.S. cardinals and three U.S. Catholic bishops.

One of those members is Cardinal Joseph L. Bernardin of Chicago, who also serves as RAAP's vice chairman. In October, the cardinal announced the

scheduling of a meeting — backed by Pope John Paul II — on international efforts to fight illegal obscenity and child pornography.

The meeting, slated to take place in Rome in early 1992, will explore the efforts of RAAP's efforts leaders to fight pornography, according to Cardinal Bernardin.

What unites the minds of many feminist and religious thinkers — not to mention some psychologists and academics — on this issue is fear of the alleged potential for evil held by X-rated materials.

Many critics of pornography contend that allowing such materials to circulate freely undermines hopes of creating a society in which women are treated with equality, families are encouraged to flourish, and children can grow up in a secure environment.

Concerns about pornography also are rooted in fear over other issues that have occupied the public forum in recent years.

Many charge that a social atmosphere of permissive sexual behavior has led to the rising prevalence of herpes, syphilis, gonorrhea and, of course, AIDS.

Some families fear that it is becoming impossible to raise children with healthy sexual attitudes in a nation awash in sexually charged books, magazines, films, videos, television shows and music.

And, in an era when fighting rape and sexual harassment has become a feminist priority, some worry that their efforts will be futile so long as society refuses to recognize what they see as the violence done to women by pornography.

Indeed, the Catholic Church has long expressed concern that the proliferation of pornography would bring with it a host of other ills. The Vatican expressed precisely that concern in June of 1989, when the Pontifical Council for Social Communications released a statement entitled: "Pornography and Violence in the Media: A Pastoral Response."

In part, the statement read: "It has been said that there can be a psychological link between pornography and sadistic violence, and some pornography is itself overtly violent in theme and content. Those who view or read such material run the risk of carrying over such attitudes and behavior into their own relationships and can come to lack reverence and respect for others as precious children of God ..."

Michael S. Warren, pastor of Christ Community Church in Brockport, gave a more blunt assessment of the alleged dangers of using pornography.

"In the name of tolerance and in the name of enlightenment, we've become stupid in society," he asserted.

Warren is a member of the western Monroe County chapter of the AFA, which monitors sexual content and violence in such media as TV, film and music.

In the past couple of weeks, Warren said, his and other area churches have distributed white ribbons to be worn by congregation members. The ribbons are intended to raise awareness of pornography as an issue and inform observers that those wearing ribbons oppose pornography.

Warren stressed that the AFA does not support "censorship." Rather, he said, the organization wants police and courts to enforce existing laws that ban such materials as child pornography and any hard-core porn with a violent edge.

Additionally, the AFA, through its bimonthly *Journal of the American Family Association*, seeks to educate the public about the detrimental manner in which pornography consistently portrays women.

"The thing I think we have to realize (is) that pornography leads to violence against women," Warren remarked.

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# PORNOGRAPHY