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## Letters...

Catholic Physicians' Guild

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# Letters...

## Position Paper Comment

To the Editor:

The conclusion of "Education in Wholesome Chastity" (*Linacre Quarterly*, February, 1982) was reprinted in *Report*, 3:5 (1982), published by the Human Life and Natural Family Planning Foundation. Taken by itself, the conclusion has already sparked inquiries to me, so that I am writing a response and hope that Mr. Larry Kane, executive director of the Human Life and Natural Family Planning Foundation, will publish it.

A full reading of the article presents a different picture than the conclusion gives. While I was not present at the last meeting of the NFPCG, so could not speak to the issue, I fully agree that parents are the best sex educators for their children, and am opposed to value-free sex education in the classroom.

The paper does not address the important area of the teenager whose parents have not spoken about sex prior to the child's puberty. It is the experience of many, including our own group, that such children cannot "hear" sex education from their own parents under such circumstances. Parent A can teach child B, but not child A, if there was no foundation laid for this instruction before puberty. Puberal children simply cannot "see" their parents as sexual beings! We fully agree that classroom, or other group instruction in fertility awareness, should not be given without involving the parents. We achieve this by approaching the parents first, and then asking the youngsters to obtain written consent from their parents. This way we build the bridge which allows parents to tell the children what their values and expectations are.

Unless this aspect of the need to teach children who have not had the optimal home background is faced, the reader is left with the impression that

programs such as ours are either in opposition to the Magisterium, or a disservice. Our results to date indicate that the programs are anything but a disservice.

— Hanna Klaus, M.D.

## On NFPCG Position Paper

*This is a response by Thomas A. Horkan, Jr., to the position paper on sex education of the National Federation of Catholic Physicians' Guilds, entitled "Education in Wholesome Chastity." Mr. Horkan is the executive director of the Florida Catholic Conference. The text of the NFPCG paper appeared in the February, 1982 Linacre Quarterly.*

To the Editor:

The position paper on sex education is disappointing, not so much for the issues that it deals with, but for those it fails to deal with.

At the direction of the bishops of Florida, I coordinated an in-depth study of programs in human sexuality being conducted in Catholic parishes and schools, for parents and children. We were asked to determine whether there were good or bad programs being conducted in the state, what constituted a good or a bad program, and to make recommendations for the future. What started out to be a two-year study ended up lasting four years. Every time we completed one stage of our work, we discovered many more problems than we had ever dreamed of; but there were some very clear conclusions. One was that a vast majority of parents and of religious education teachers felt a strong need for good Catholic programs in human sexuality

for children and found a lack of curriculum guidelines or good materials. Most parish religious education programs and most parochial schools had programs dealing with human sexuality, but they were usually informal programs conducted by physicians, nurses or parents and of undetermined religious, ethical or pedagogical orthodoxy. Pastors, principals, and religious education directors urged on us the development of guidelines, program outlines and materials.

Parents who urged these programs spoke of the concern over the hedonistic culture in which their children were growing up, different from that of their own childhood, and the need for strong Church teaching on chastity, sexual morality, and the commandments.

Our study was done concurrently with a study by the U.S. Catholic Conference, and concluded somewhat similarly, with a call for a sound program in Catholic sexuality involving the family, the parish and the school in a cooperative effort. Subsequently, Pope John Paul II in his *Apostolic Exhortation on the Family*, published in December, 1981, stressed the duty of parents to educate in the essential values of human life, and referred to the role of the school in that education as follows:

Sex education, which is a basic right and duty of parents, must always be carried out under their attentive guidance whether at home or in educational centers chosen and controlled by them. In this regard, the Church reaffirms the law of subsidiarity, which the school is bound to observe when it cooperates in sex education, by entering into the same spirit that animates the parents.

In this context education for chastity is absolutely essential . . .

In view of the close links between the sexual dimension of the person and his or her ethical values, education must bring the children to a knowledge of and respect for the moral norms as the necessary and highly valuable guarantee for

responsible personal growth in human sexuality.

The relationship of the parish, the Catholic school and parents is one that has been stressed by the fathers of Vatican II, and in any number of Church documents since that time. Parental involvement in the planning and direction of religious education programs, and particularly in family life programs is an essential requirement, insisted on throughout the Church. *The Declaration on Christian Education* of Vatican Council II, and the National Catechetical Directory, *Sharing the Light of Faith*, deal with education of young people in Christian sexuality.

This is the issue, the role of the parish and school in the imparting of the Church's teaching on human sexuality, that the position paper omits. It simply opposes "all distinct formal programs of classroom sex education for children and adolescents as . . . a usurpation of the rights of parents."

When parents call for moral education in sexuality, plan it and are involved in it, how can their rights be usurped? All of the guidelines for church or parochial school programs which I have seen, call for that parental involvement.

The position paper says "let the Catholic schools teach the Ten Commandments, neither excluding nor isolating the sixth and ninth." But how does one teach the sixth and ninth commandments without ever considering our human sexuality, without considering abortion, pre-marital sex, chastity, marriage and its permanency, or all the other elements of a human sexuality program?

The position paper identifies classroom sex education (CSE) as the *Playboy*, *Masters and Johnson*, *Planned Parenthood* and *SIECUS* program of sex education. We all oppose that view of sexuality and that type of education. Yet the position paper lumps together the U.S. Catholic Conference guidelines, *Education in Human Sexuality for Christians*, and the Benziger

Family Life Series, as part of that kind of CSE. In doing that, it ignores 95% of those publications and concentrates on a few significant, but narrowly limited flaws.

I have publicly criticized both the USCC guidelines and the Benziger Family Life Series, and can identify objectionable aspects of each in addition to those mentioned in the paper. But the negative matters in those publications are minimal when compared to the overall positive and valuable service which they render.

The fact of the matter is that the USCC guidelines are directed to the family, the parish and the school and expressly call for the cooperation of each. It is the parents' primary duty and right to educate their children, especially in sexual morality, and they are entitled to the aid of the school community and the parish community in this effort. That is what these guidelines are designed for.

It would be easy to agree with the conclusion of your paper if the only two choices were a classroom course in sex or no treatment of sexuality at all. But there is another option and that is what the USCC guidelines, the Benziger series and many parents and educators strive for: competent Catholic religious education in human sexuality conducted in the family, home and school.

I hope the National Federation of Catholic Physicians' Guilds will reconsider, amend or expand on the position paper at its next meeting.

efforts toward retention of orthodox ethical standards and Christian compassion in the healing and consoling arts.

— R. Sullivan  
Fall River, Mass.

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#### On O'Boyle Article

To the Editor:

I was intrigued by Professor O'Boyle's complex table of cost analysis (*Linacre Quarterly*, February, 1982) based on Excessively Expensive (EE) and Not Excessively Expensive (NEE) factors. A possible simplification of this analysis would require consideration of the additional factors: Marginally Excessively Expensive (MEE), More-or-less Young (MY), and More-or-less Old (MO). Although some might object to introducing age discrimination into the analysis, the advantage of simplicity clearly outweighs the questionable disadvantage of injustice. All cases can now be judged according to the simple formula:

EE-NEE-MEE-NEE-MY-NEE-MO

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William G. White, M.D.

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#### A Request

To the Editor:

This may sound like a very unusual request, but it is a very sincere one. We are a group of missionary sisters working in a very rural area of South Korea. We have a hospital of 130 beds and are

extending it a little to be better able to meet the needs of this area.

This coming year we hope to start an intern program for doctors and move on to having a doctors' residency program also. As you well know, a very good library is essential to either of these programs. You may be saying to yourself, can English medical books or periodicals be of help in Korea? The answer is definitely yes. Many of the books from which the doctors study are in English and most of them, if not all, are American.

What I am asking for is this. Could you kindly send us any back numbers of the books and periodicals that you would have left over since 1979? Any kind of medical books would be deeply appreciated here. Once we get started, we hope to be on your list of buyers, but right now we need many books and are not in the financial position to buy a great number. No doubt, as time goes on, we shall be on your mailing list, but to start, could you

please help with back numbers as a gift? We would be so very, very grateful for any help that you could give us at this time.

If there are other places back there in the good U.S. from which we could receive help to get a good library started for our doctors, please let us have the addresses.

With sincere thanks for any help that you can give us at this time, we ask God's blessing on all you do and on your great organization.

Sr. Clare Farren, Hospital Director  
St. Columban's Hospital  
Mokpo  
Cholla Nam Do 580  
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*Editor's Note: Anyone interested could send materials directly to Sister Clare Farren at the address given.*