



NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CATHOLIC-JEWISH STATEMENT URGES RENEWED ANTI-PORNOGRAPHY EFFORTS

WASHINGTON--In a strongly-worded joint statement, Catholic and Jewish religious leaders are calling for renewed efforts by the religious communities, teachers, parents and all citizens "to help stem the proliferation of pornography" throughout the country.

The two-page statement by the Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs (BCEIA) of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Interreligious Affairs Committee of the Synagogue Council of America recognizes "the constitutionally guaranteed right of freedom of speech."

"At the same time, however, we are greatly concerned about the alarming growth of pornography," the religious leaders said. "Graphic public displays, books, videocassettes, advertising displays and even telecommunications frequently portray degrading and even violent sexual behavior which demeans the human character, debases the individual and is openly pornographic and morally offensive."

"As Jews and Catholics, we teach that the Creator fashioned each person in the Divine image," the leaders said. "Any material that demeans the inherent dignity of women, men and children by removing sexuality from the context of meaningful interpersonal relationships denies the image of the Creator within all of us."

The joint statement calls first upon religious leaders themselves "to teach--openly and consistently--important truths about sexual morality...the values of family life and responsible

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life in society." The leaders then "call upon our fellow citizens to help...by refusing to purchase or to view pornographic materials," and appeal to teachers "to openly address these issues" and to parents "to give guidance to their children."

The declaration was developed in the course of twice-yearly meetings, begun in 1987, between the Synagogue Council and the Bishops' Conference, covering a wide range of issues of common concern. The joint consultations are headed by Rabbi Haskel Lookstein, President of the Synagogue Council of America, and Cardinal John O'Connor of New York, Episcopal Moderator for Catholic-Jewish Relations for the U.S. Catholic Bishops.

An earlier joint statement, "A Lesson of Value," issued in 1990, called for a rethinking of the approach to moral education in the nation's public schools, and has received widespread attention.

The full text of the joint statement on pornography is attached.

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