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Bishops Pull Out of ND Meeting

MATTHEW V. SMITH
Editor-in-Chief

Members of the U.S. Bishops' Committee on Doctrine have abandoned plans to host a meeting at Notre Dame amid concerns that their presence could be construed as an endorsement of the "Vagina Monologues," the controversial play which is tentatively scheduled to be performed on campus March 26-28.

The two-day meeting, which is to begin Monday, will now take place at the convent of the Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration in Mishawaka, according to a source close to Fort Wayne-South Bend Bishop John D'Arcy. In an email message leaked to the Rover, the source

said that D'Arcy "feels that it is scandalous and very sad that the University (Fr. Jenkins) has decided not to stand in solidarity with the bishops."

The email, which was circulated Wednesday among several dozen members of the Notre Dame community, also stated that University President Fr. John Jenkins had been asked by the bishops to ban the 'Monologues' on campus this year. After he refused, the bishops decided to move the meeting "as a sign of their disagreement" with the performance of the polarizing play on Notre Dame's campus, the email said.

In addition, the bishops have relocated their accommodations from the Morris Inn on Notre Dame's campus to the Inn at

St. Mary's, according to a source familiar with the planning process.

The meeting had been organized in part by Prof. John Cavadini, Chair of the Department of Theology and one of six official consultants to the Committee on Doctrine. Cavadini could not be reached for comment as of this writing.

"Only a couple of [the Committee's seven] bishops were involved with the decision," which was arrived at only after the bishops had done "everything they possibly could" to come an agreement with the administration, said a source within the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Secretariat for Doctrine -- the Committee's D.C.-based Washington,

administrative arm -- who asked not to be identified.

"Cardinal Levada was in the loop," said the source, referring to the American-born Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Levada, who is scheduled to be the keynote speaker at next week's meeting, served as Archbishop of San Francisco until 2005, when he was asked by Pope Benedict XVI to succeed him as head of the Vatican dicastery charged with overseeing doctrinal orthodoxy.

Rumors about the change of venue and the reasons behind it began to circulate over the weekend, but went unconfirmed until the Rover began to investigate them Wednesday. The

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What about the Children? Pregnancy at ND

MARY KATE DALY
Staff Writer

FOR APPROXIMATELY eight and a half months of every year, August through May, South Bend's population of college-aged women increases by an estimated 7500 persons as students come from across the country to fill the University of Notre Dame, Saint Mary's College and Holy Cross College campuses.

Reviewing statistics from the Indiana Induced Termination of Pregnancy Report (IITPR), available on the Indiana Department of Health website, The Rover has discovered that while the number of abortions performed annually in St. Joe County increased between 2003

and 2005 (the most recent year

Bishops Balk at Monologues, Walk from Notre Dame

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decision itself was made roughly two weeks ago, the source said.

"We understand that not all are in full agreement about the propriety of allowing performances of this play on campus," said Dennis Brown, Asst. Vice-President for News & Information in a statement. "Because of concerns about the play and its potential performance, we have worked collaboratively with the bishops to move the conference out of respect for everyone involved."

In a phone conversation, Brown declined to elaborate further on the situation.

The Committee on Doctrine is chaired by Most Rev. William Lori, Bishop of Bridgeport. Other members include Archbishops Jose H. Gomez of San Antonio and Donald W. Wuerl of Washington, as well as Bishops Leonard Blair of Toledo, Robert McManus of Worcester, Arthur Serratelli of Paterson, and Allen Vigneron of Oakland. Chicago Archbishop Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I., is a consultant to the Committee.

The strong desire of the bishops not to be seen as endorsing the 'Monologues' forced Fr. Jenkins to choose between hosting their meeting

and standing by his previously stated position that the play may be performed without a fundraising component, so long as it is done within an academic setting.

This year, the 'Monologues' are being co-sponsored by the faculties of the sociology and anthropology departments.

Prof. Mark Schurr, Chair of the Department of Anthropology pointed out that, "we are not endorsing the monologues; we are just sponsoring a discussion around them."

He explained this as teaching a "different intellectual perspective" to which members of the faculty do not necessarily subscribe.

Although both departments have already voted unanimously to sponsor the 'Monologues,' the event must first be approved by the College of Arts & Letters.

"The Dean's office has not yet received a proposal for the performance," Dean Mark Roche said via email Wednesday

evening. "Both departments made the sponsoring of the Vagina Monologues contingent on putting together satisfactory academic panels," Prof. Schurr said.

"Unless that happens, we will not be able to sponsor it."

The academic panels in question are still being put together by the event's five student organizers. One of them, senior Lisa Rauh, commented that, "they have tentative approval, which is conditional upon it being an academic event, as determined by Father Jenkins' criteria."

In order to complete their proposal to the Dean's office, the student organizers must finalize a list of faculty members who will participate in the post-play dialogue. Rauh said that the proposal would tentatively be submitted to the Dean's office for approval as early as next week.

As to the fate of the proposal, Rauh was confident that "we

have accounted for every single aspect of what it is to put on an academic event at Notre Dame." She also said that the play's performance has received "conditional approval," pending their completion of the academic panel proposal.

The sponsoring departments tread carefully while searching for appropriate dates to host the performance. "We didn't want to have it on 'V-Day,'" the culmination of a worldwide campaign against sexual violence towards women, explained Schurr.

Scheduling around other campus events was also necessary in order to accommodate the needs of the students and administration. Specifically, Schurr noted how Junior Parent's Weekend might be a bad weekend to have the play because, "some parents might be offended or upset." Ultimately, the organizers settled on the week following Easter.

Even though the performance and accompanying academic panels have not yet been cleared by Dean Roche's office, the leadership team of "The Vagina Monologues" was able to hold auditions this past December with tentative approval from the administration. They were also allowed by the Student

Activities Office to put up posters advertising the try-outs. With dates set for March 26th through the 28th, performance space has already been reserved in DeBartolo Hall, according to Rauh.

During President Jenkins' first year in office he was confronted with the contentious issue of whether or not to continue to allow the play to be performed on-campus. After months of deliberation and discussion, he determined to permit "The Vagina Monologues" at Notre Dame. At the time, Bishop D'Arcy responded to the decision with disappointment, and posted a notice to that effect inside the Basilica of the Sacred Heart.

After being performed on campus in 2006, "The Vagina Monologues" was held last year at a Unitarian church off-campus. Schurr attributed this to the lack of organization among the students then involved and the insufficiently compelling case made to the administration.

Kathleen Donahue contributed to this report. Contact Matt at msmith24@nd.edu or Kathleen at kdonahue1@nd.edu.