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From the Editor's Desk

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From the Editor's Desk



Acceptance of *Linacre Quarterly* Award

Dr. Peters, thank you for this distinguished award.

I look upon it as the most signal honor which has ever been bestowed upon me, as it represents many things which I highly cherish.

The *Linacre Quarterly* Award is a symbol of the esteem which the National Federation of Catholic Physicians' Guilds places upon an individual who visibly supports, elucidates and articulates the philosophy and ethics of medical practice in the context of the Church's teaching. It is also an affirmation of the recipient's loyalty and dedication to the pursuit of truth.

This award has been presented annually to a physician or scholar who, by his/her writings, personal example and scholarship, has exemplified the highest ideals of being a Christian physician or scholar. When I recently reviewed the names of *Linacre Quarterly* Award recipients of years past, I was profoundly struck by their prominence and by the good they have done for the Church. Names of recipients which stand out, some of whom are with us today, include Dr. John Brennan, Dr. Gene Diamond, Sister Anna Polcino, Dr. Fred Taylor and Dr. Gene Laforet. Scholars include Prof. Arthur Dyck (Harvard), Prof. Paul Ramsey (Princeton), Prof. William May (Catholic University of America), Rev. John Connery, S.J., one of America's foremost theologians, and Father John Harvey, O.S.F.S.

To be included in this impressive array of recipients gives me great pleasure. But in all humility, I feel somewhat unworthy of the honor. I wish to thank, also, our Board of Directors as well as past presidents who have supported and encouraged me over the past 18 years. Their faith, confidence and trust in me and in my editorial judgment have been a bulwark during times of stress and self-doubt. For this, I am extremely grateful.

Linacre Quarterly is the result of team effort and I want to thank publicly those who work closely with me in its production, viz., Rosemary Tlachac, my hard-working and very talented assistant editor; Bob Herzog, our managing editor; Dick Kress, our printer, and Dr. Gene Laforet, our abstracts editor.

Our past and present book review editors, Prof. William May and Father Robert Barry respectively, plus our editorial advisory board, have given excellent assistance in their various areas of expertise, and in stimulating material for *Linacre*.

I would be less than candid if I did not include at this point the one person who is, I feel, responsible for the quality of *Linacre Quarterly*. When I first became involved with *Linacre*, she supplied many creative ideas and a vision of what this periodical should be. She served as a sounding board for my editorials, a critic of controversial articles. She is my house theologian, philosopher and psychologist, my BEST friend and companion. She has encouraged and affirmed me through my tenure as editor. I would like my wife, Mary Evelyn, to stand up and be acknowledged for all the service and love she has provided me and you members of the National Federation of Catholic Physicians' Guilds.

To be presented with the *Linacre Quarterly* Award in New York City is particularly meaningful to me, for I am a native son of this city, having been born and educated in Brooklyn. I attended Bishop Loughlin High School under the loving guidance of the Christian Brothers, and there I developed my deep and abiding love for study and for the Lord. To the Brothers, I owe a great debt for all that I am and have achieved.

My interest in medical ethics came from my mother, who recently departed this life. Our general practitioner in Freeport, New York, Dr. Dearborn Bird, took good care of us Mulloolys. He was more than a run-of-the-mill G.P., according to Mom, and I asked her why. She replied that he had attended Holy Cross College, where they taught ethics. This, she explained, was the discipline which dealt with the morality of human action, and for a doctor, that was fundamental.

"Do the right thing and all else will turn out all right," she would say. I guess I absorbed all of this and gravitated toward this field through medical school and practice.

When I was appointed editor of *Linacre Quarterly*, in 1969, I came well-prepared for the task. Realizing the vast complexity of medical ethics, I was quite apprehensive as to my ability to assume the job. However, during the Mass at the Waldorf Astoria where our national meeting was

held that year, one of the scriptural readings inspired me and gave me courage: "The Lord is my rock and my salvation."

The editor's job was not an easy one. There was very little interest in medical ethics in 1969, and there were very few persons working in that field. With all the ethical dilemmas which were visible, I was appalled at the lack of scholars in the medical-ethical field. Theological dissent had reared its head, and as I found out, the dissenters were not so much interested in authentic teaching, as they were interested in setting up their own magisterium. I do not think I would be very far off the mark if I said that they were more like wolves dressed in sheep's clothing, scattering and dividing the flock.

How different it is today! Now everyone is interested in medical ethics. Hardly a week goes by that we do not see in the headlines or on TV some medical-ethical problem highlighted. Unfortunately, starting from different premises, many answers which differ from our own are given as an ethical solution to the ethical dilemma. It is in a situation like this that the wisdom of the Church is so important. The time-tested validity of the ordinary magisterial teaching of the Church helps us keep straight in our minds what is most essential in upholding the dignity and sacredness of the individual in health and in sickness. It is the responsibility of the *Linacre Quarterly* to spread the wisdom of the Church's teaching in medical ethics to our readers. This is our task and our purpose. We shall continue to remain faithful and true to this commitment.

As we view the world in which we live, we can see the wisdom of the Church's teaching and her concern for the dignity and sacredness of the individual - concern for a dignity given to each creature by God, our Creator. The present state of medical ethics is one of great confusion. Rampant abortion, active euthanasia, runaway reproductive technology, are vivid examples of the confusion regarding medical ethics not only in the medical community, but also in society in general.

The Church is the only moral agency today which gives opposition to the evil inherent in these areas. Our beloved medical profession, which once represented the highest ethical standards in society, has let itself be corrupted from within, by lowering its standards. It has insidiously absorbed the values and standards of alien philosophies which subvert the dignity and sacredness of human life. No longer can we count upon medical societies to encourage their individual members to remain faithful to their Hippocratic commitment to "do no harm."

The National Federation and its most visible link with the world will continue to remain faithful and true to the magisterial teaching of the Church regarding medical ethics. While the effort may be long, discouraging, frustrating and tiresome, we may be encouraged by the thought of those who have preceded us in similar commitments. We do not seek popularity, but rather dedication to those things which really matter: God's will and desires for His creatures. We are but His instruments. If we are true to Him in our relationships with our patients, that is all that

matters. As my mother would say, "Do the right thing and all else will turn out right."

It is my hope that when future generations of Catholic physicians look back upon our generation and see how we, as Catholic physicians, stood out in contradiction to our contemporaries, how we remained faithful to our Church and to our Hippocratic oath while others were falling by the wayside, those future generations will say of us as Winston Churchill said of England in 1940 when she stood alone, that this was the Catholic physicians' "finest hour".

— **John P. Mullooly, M.D.**
Editor
