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## Letters to the Editor ...

Catholic Physicians' Guild

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# Letters to the Editor . . .

## Dear Editor:

I wish to ask your readers' help in a scholarly project in which I am engaged—the preparation of a comprehensive treatment of Catholic morality under the general title, *The Way of the Lord Jesus*. The first volume, dealing with Christian moral principles, appeared in 1983; the second, *Living a Christian Life*, will appear soon (Quincy, Ill.: Franciscan Press, 1993). It deals with moral norms which apply to all or most lay people and those which apply to all members of the Church. Eventually, the fourth volume will treat the responsibilities of clergy and religious.

Presently I am starting work on volume three. I will deal with some of the less common responsibilities of lay people. And here is where I need and ask your readers' help.

Every conscientious person sometimes has a moral question to which he or she cannot find a satisfactory answer. I do not mean problems about resisting temptation or living up to one's clear responsibilities. Rather, I have in mind difficulties in figuring out what is the right thing to do. And sometimes nothing in the Church's teaching provides an answer (see *Gaudium et spes*, 43).

My request to your readers is this: Send me in writing questions of this kind which you think deserve treatment.

Some questions of this sort might be dealt with in treatises on medical ethics, legal ethics, business ethics, and so on. For example, may a physician who judges a laboratory test unnecessary order it, despite its cost and burden on the patient, in order to lessen the risk of being sued for malpractice? May a lawyer handle cases in which clients seek something legally available but, by their own admission, unfair? May the manager of a business close a deal, otherwise morally unexceptionable, by paying the bribe demanded by the other company's purchasing agent?

I shall welcome questions from physicians, lawyers, and managers, but other laymen and laywomen surely have difficult moral questions which deserve careful study although

they do not fall into any of the usual compartments.

Those who send questions will greatly help this project; in turn, I hope they and others will be helped by the results. I will acknowledge and carefully consider every question received. Also, while I cannot promise a prompt reply to every question, much less an adequate answer, I will do my best to provide correspondents with any help I can toward thinking through their questions.

Once more, it is important that questions be sent *in writing*, and it will help if a question is accompanied by a sketch of the relevant circumstances and the sender's own moral reflections on it.

My address is:

Mount Saint Mary's College  
Emmitsburg, MD 21727

My thanks to you and your readers for considering this request.

Germain Grisez

## Letter from New Zealand

Dear Editor,

The latest quinquennial census showed that membership of the four main churches (Anglican, Catholic, Presbyterian and Methodist) has slipped from 63% to 57%. But the vague generic classification of "Christian" has doubled. More than half of the adult population were receiving some form of social welfare, which must be perceived as state paternalism gone mad. Over 40% of adults held some form of tertiary education qualification.

What a year it has been! As Queen Elizabeth said, it was an *annus horribilis*. We must sympathize with her in her many family tragedies which will cause crises not only for the monarchy but also for the Church of England. The extraordinary rise in sexual crimes has affected this country as much as others — pedophilia (one priest imprisoned); various perversions in a sanctimonious "liberal" commune; and widespread abuse of children. The whole scene is inexplicable except as a manifestation of the diabolical, the

price a community must pay for rejecting religious practise.

An historic medical achievement was in teleradiology. Laurence Grundy, MD, of Florida transmitted a CT scan of a patient's abdomen to a computer in the home of David Morseth, MD, in Dunedin, our southernmost city. It took three minutes for the image to be sent by telephone and a further minute to appear on the screen. But it was a costly exercise.

The annual growth rate of the population over 5 years was only 0.7%; and the total figure a mere 3.4 million. Contraception, sterilization and abortion are at saturation levels. The New Zealand rate of vasectomy is stated to be the highest in the world — a dubious claim to fame.

The economic collapse of 1987 has forced the Government to abandon many socialist principles which have dominated national life for 50 years. The all-powerful unions have been emasculated, shops are open seven days a week, benefits have been cut and most State services have been privatized. But this nursery of unionism has thrown up a most unlikely pressure group, the Prostitutes Collective (sic). Moreover, this virtuous example of sisterhood attracts a Government grant of \$180,000 to help in the noble work of educating their clients in the arcane mysteries of Safe (meaning "Unsafe") Sex, as a prophylaxis against AIDS. It could only happen in New Zealand.

The health services have been turned upside down by the present "reforming" government. Medical Association leaders admit that they cannot fully understand the implications of so many radical changes. There have been unprecedented strikes by

nurses and residents, mainly over pay issues. The main thrust of the reforms is to abandon the formerly free public hospital and pharmaceutical services and this naturally has caused much resentment, but it is an economic necessity.

Among distinguished American visitors during the year we welcomed Fr. Paul Marx, OSB, of Washington, DC, who described NZ as "the most beautiful country in the world", and Prof. Eugene Diamond, MD, of Chicago. With the \$NZ being so weak it is easy for Americans to come "down under" for a cheap holiday. The distance is the main problem but there are now 12-hour non-stop flights from Los Angeles to Auckland.

If I may be permitted a personal note — my eldest son has become a Monsignor. And my youngest son has done some 400 laparoscopic cholecystectomies in the past 18 months with remarkable results. A pathologist friend asked him what he was going to do when the city runs out of gallbladders. Finally an important book by a NZ author was published by Alba House, New York, in 1992. It is "The Doctor and Christian Marriage". It demonstrates that papal teaching in the area of sexuality, contraception, sterilization abortion, IVF, etc. is not only correct, it is also the only way of life that leads to marital happiness and an ideal spirituality. Anything else eventually turns out to be a disaster. The name of the revolutionary author is none other than — wait for it — the signatory of this Letter! Thanks for the commercial! A bargain at only \$US 9.95.

**H. P. Dunn, MD,  
Auckland, New Zealand**