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## President's Page

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## President's Page



My deepest regret on becoming president is that George Blaha, the original president-elect, because of his untimely death, was not able to assume the presidency of the Federation himself at our recent meeting. He was a staunch Catholic, dedicated to the teachings of the Church and Her Magisterium. He would have been particularly proud of our colleague, Gene Diamond, and his work as chairman of the scientific program. The program itself was a striking demonstration of the function of physicians as illuminators of the truths of the Judeo-Christian tradition. This illumination arose out of the participants' reflective experience of medical practice and searching scientific enquiry guided and protected by natural and supernatural revelations, non-contradictory truths authored by God Whose truth is one.

Thomas Aquinas says it best in his chapter entitled *That the Philosopher and Theologian Consider Creatures in Different Ways*. (Su. C.G., Bk II, Ch. 4)

. . . the two kinds of teaching do not follow the same order. For in the teaching of philosophy, which considers creatures in themselves and leads us from them to the knowledge of God, the first consideration is about creatures; the last, of God. But in the teaching of faith, which considers creatures only in their relation to God, the consideration of God comes first, that of creatures afterward. And thus the doctrine of faith is more perfect, as being more like the knowledge possessed by God, Who, in knowing Himself, immediately knows other things.

In an earlier chapter (Ch. 3) entitled *That Knowledge of the Nature of Creatures Serves to Destroy Errors Concerning God*, Aquinas stresses the importance of the philosopher's work (here the physician). He states:

The consideration of creatures is further necessary, not only for

the building up of truth, but also for the destruction of errors. For errors about creatures sometimes lead one astray from the truth of the faith, so far as the errors are inconsistent with true knowledge of God.

In this context he concludes:

It is, therefore, evident that the opinion is false of those who asserted that it made no difference to the truth of the faith what anyone holds about creatures, so long as one thinks rightly about God, as Augustine tells us in his book, *On The Origin of the Soul*. For error concerning creatures, by subjecting them to causes other than God, spills over into false opinion about God, and takes men's minds away from Him, to Whom faith seeks to lead them.

He adds:

For this reason Scripture threatens punishment to those who err about creatures, as to unbelievers, in the word of the Psalm (27:5): "Because they have not understood the works of the Lord and the operation of His hands, Thou shalt destroy them, and shalt not build them up"; and: "these things they thought and were deceived," and further on: "They esteemed not the honor of holy souls." (Wis. 2:21-3)

The loss of faith of priests, nuns and laity under the influence of the seductive siren songs of the secular world which preaches false doctrines of self-fulfillment is sufficient to underscore the profundity of Aquinas' analysis.

It is perhaps appropriate to point out that I did not aspire to the presidency of the Federation, not because I would not have enjoyed the honor nor because of an undue modesty, but because I truly felt there were others in the wings, exemplary physicians whose great talents could well be utilized by the Federation. It was sufficient reward to have shared annually the companionship of a group of exceptional physicians who gave cohesion to my professional and personal life. With the possible exception of past-president Eusebius Murphy, I have probably attended Federation meetings longer than any other member. It extends over a thirty year period and is due, not to a greater dedication, but simply to the fact that I have outlived others. It is a particular honor to me to follow in the footsteps of Ed Kilroy and to have before me his example, since he was everything a president should be.

Finally, I am not unmindful of the Oath which installed me as president. I do not believe it is intended as window dressing. I assure our membership of the seriousness of my intent when I pledged that I "will work and pray for the success of its programs, and give full cooperation to the Church in her mission of salvation."

**Herbert Ratner, M.D.**