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## President's Page

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## President's Page



The term "quality of life" is sweet music to the ears of some, and a mental ulcer to others. This is particularly true when it is applied to the family, the one institution most consistently attacked in the past 30 years in the modern world.

The English word "quality" has its origin in the Greek "Poiotes" (pronounced Poy-ah-tees) which in the Aristotelian and even Homeric sense refers to the "distinctive and inherent features of a thing."

It is unfortunate that the meaning of the word "quality" becomes a dislocation when applied to life (or the family). This second meaning is concerned with the "degree of *excellence*" which is really derived from an entirely different Greek root.

Thus we have a world-wide problem, with one group referring to the quality of life in terms of degree of excellence or hierarchy of values, etc. I submit that what this misguided thinking is really discussing is quality control. If I may, to demonstrate the point, I would like to paraphrase the technical definition of quality control in terms of this view of quality of life.

*Quality control* (of life). The use of (biogenetic) engineering designed to insure adequate quality in the manufactured (conceptive) products by initial critical study of the initial (inseminative) design, materials available to assist manufacture (growth) and (maternal) workmanship followed by periodic inspection (amniocentesis) and analysis of the results of the inspection to determine defects and removal of them (abortion) and/or the causes of such defects before completion of the product (birth).

Such a concept of quality, i.e., quality control of life I submit, is far more prevalent throughout the world than the original, humane Christian attitude

- which insists upon the dignity of each and *every* one of Christ's brothers and sisters;

- which insists that quality control — or degree of excellence — is more appropriately applied to furniture, food, jewelry, etc.;
- which insists that the greatest challenge to medicine has always been God's most precious children — the congenitally deformed, the lame, the halt and the blind; our greatest challenge and His most precious because of who they are and not because of what they are or what percentage their capacities fulfill;
- which insists that people must not be treated as things.

The conclusion is inevitable. People first meet, learn to know, love and respect other people — in the family. The one word which pervades the family and is an essential part of family teaching is the same concept which is missing in the “quality is excellence” or “quality control” thinking — and that word is “commitment.”

When one talks of a commitment, one talks about people. Whatever the wording of a commitment, if it is broken, people suffer.

When two people marry they make a commitment to one another; they obligate themselves or bind themselves to take some moral or intellectual position or course of action. They assume an act of fidelity until death to one another and to those whom God sends to them.

We as physicians, as Catholics, as those who walk with St. Luke in company with the Divine Physician — WE HAVE NO CHOICE!

We must do everything in our power to defend and develop and nurture marriage and the family.

Ours too, is a life of commitment. We must teach in the consulting room, clinic, wards, operating room, public lectures, to the growing mind, to the marriageable mind, to the celibate mind, to the parent-oriented mind; by our lives and our example, respect for all people, the opposite sex and the beauty of family life. All else, I'm certain, in time, will follow.

— William A. Lynch, M.D.