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## Message From the Spiritual Advisor

Edwin F. O'Brien

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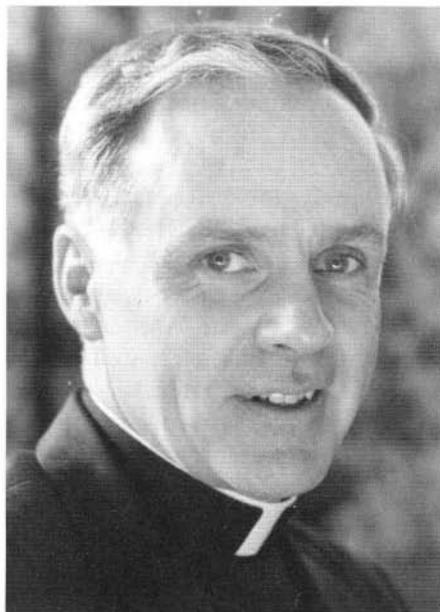
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## Message from the Spiritual Advisor

*Rev. Msgr. Edwin F. O'Brien, rector of St. Joseph Seminary, Dunwoodie, Yonkers, New York, succeeds Msgr. Dino Lorenzetti as spiritual advisor of the National Federation of Catholic Physicians' Guilds. Rector of St. Joseph's since 1985, Monsignor O'Brien was, prior to that, secretary to Cardinals Cooke and O'Connor, and director of communications for the Archdiocese of New York.*



### *In The Beginning . . .*

The invitation extended to me by your board of directors to assume the duties of spiritual advisor to the members of the National Federation of Catholic Physicians' Guilds is one that I pondered before accepting. The precise nature of the responsibility, the time expected of the spiritual advisor, the talents and abilities called for, are details of which I am still uncertain. After counsel with several knowledgeable "elders", I replied to Archbishop Elko and Dr. Thomas Hughes that I was honored to be asked and did accept the invitation. I am most grateful for the encouragement I received from my predecessor, Monsignor Lorenzetti.

My present full-time ministry is to supervise the formation of priests and permanent deacons, most of whom will serve the Archdiocese of New York. As I begin my fourth year as rector of St. Joseph's, I am increasingly enthusiastic about my role — what could be more important in shaping the Church of the future than the shaping of the clergy of the future? Following a generation of relative confusion in some sectors of the Church as to the role of the priest, his identity in a changed and changing Church, and the precise nature of his unique Call, it is high time that we challenge

gifted and generous Catholic men with the theology of the priesthood which has perdured from apostolic times through the Vatican Council and in the clear teachings of our popes and bishops since the Council. There are many who are more than willing to accept the challenge to priesthood clearly spelled out. Idealism is far from dead.

I see this as having relevance to the medical profession as well. The role and identity of the medical doctor, his public image and the increased pressures and demands upon one called to your vocation have probably contributed to a confusion similar to that which has surrounded the priesthood in recent decades.

In seeking to dispel the confusion, nothing will be gained by burying or glossing over the vision, the ideals and assumptions which once called us to our distant but kindred vocations and which still motivate and enlighten us:

- the very plausibility of a “divine call” to vocations such as ours;
- the glory and wonder of God’s creation and the infinite worth of every human being created in His image and likeness from the first moment of life to the last;
- a moral law, universal and immutable, known to previous generations and knowable today, whose basic principles safeguard human dignity against the encroachments of misguided technocrats, politicians, scientists and theologians;
- the urgent need both to pursue the latest and soundest developments in our field and to apply them with reverence for life, compassion, patience and self-sacrifice.

I do not mean to oversimplify the complexities which I know you face and of which I am all too ignorant.

I do mean to do whatever I can to encourage and support you in your work — work which, in the recent words of Pope John Paul, “since it draws on values of the spirit, can transform itself into religious activity”.

**— Rev. Msgr. Edwin F. O’Brien**

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