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From the Editor's Desk

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Medicine and Christian Morals

In these days of moral confusion it is quite refreshing for us to welcome a home study course on Medicine and Christian Morals authored by Thomas J. O'Donnell, S.J. and published by the Catholic Home Study Institute in Leesburg, Virginia. For the readers of *Linacre Quarterly*, Father O'Donnell needs no introduction. He is well known to all of us through his articles in *Linacre* and as guest editor of *The Medical-Moral Newsletter*. His monthly commentaries in the latter publication serve as an ongoing critique on the contemporary ethical scene in the field of medicine and reflect the authentic magisterial teaching of the Church.

The course manual on medical ethics which has just been published is an excellent exposition of authentic magisterial teaching. For the sophisticated reader it should serve as an excellent review of ethical principles. For the novice in medical-ethical questions, it will provide a solid foundation for dealing with clinical dilemmas and serve as a base for further study.

The course consists of 17 lessons, an excellent bibliography, supplemental material expanding on the actual lesson, a formal text, and suggested readings. Each lesson is followed by a self-assessment test in order to see how well the material has been digested and comprehended. The course begins with six lessons laying out the foundations for medical ethics (ethics, norms of morality, voluntariety, moral conscience, determinants of morality, the principle of double effect, and the principles of cooperation). Building upon these solid foundations, the author applies them in telling fashion in the subsequent chapters. The application of

these principles to the dilemma facing us today equips the student of this course with information to help discern through many specious arguments which have evolved over the years to justify active euthanasia, abortion, in vitro fertilization, etc.

This type of course is “must reading” for the Catholic physician if he is to keep his bearings in these turbulent days. Anyone involved in the health care professions such as chaplains, nurses, administrators, social workers and others will benefit from this course. If the Catholic Church’s mission with health care is to have any credibility, it must begin with a clear understanding of its own medical ethic and the magisterial teaching underpinning this ethic. By taking this course, the student will acquire this knowledge and be able to put it into action.

During the past several decades, we have been witnesses to an assault on traditional medical ethics of the Church by forces both within and without the Church. Under the label of pluralism, the siren song of dissent has caused confusion “even among the elect”. Distorted notions of conscience have caused untold damage to millions of the faithful on their earthly journey to the Kingdom of God. This course and its content will help restore some sanity to the beleaguered faithful in their quest for unity with their God.

— John P. Mullooly M.D.

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