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From the Editor's Desk

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From the Editor's Desk



A Look at *Linacre*

With the new year, 1981, we become reflective and, in a sense, philosophical, attempting to discern the future and to evaluate the past. As your editor, with the power to make decisions to accept or reject manuscripts by critically evaluating them, to initiate new ventures—in short, to actually form and give character to your quarterly journal—it is incumbent upon me to state where we have been and where we are going with this, your journal, the *Linacre Quarterly*.

As I have said to many, it is a “labor of love,” and a job to which I devote a considerable amount of time and effort on your behalf. But in a larger sense, it is a task which is beyond the wisdom and talent of any one person and, I must confess to you all, something which I do not feel adequate to perform. Having said this, it is quite evident to me that most leaders have the same feeling about the job they have been given, be they pope, president, senator, physician, administrator, teacher or parent. As I reflect upon my stewardship to you, my readers, I recall that when I was appointed your editor in 1969 at the Waldorf Astoria in New York City, I knew the awesome responsibility which lay with this job. Another candidate for the job, I was sure, would be more adequate to the task, and I still feel this way. Yet, during the Mass celebrated by our moderator after the decision had been announced to me (informally), the words of scripture gave me courage: “The Lord is my rock and foundation,” from the psalms of my great hero, David.

After receiving this spiritual encouragement, I embarked on the job and feel more comfortable with it now than I did 12 years ago. I feel more adequate to the task because He has guided me down these difficult years. The *Linacre* is flourishing and is well received by our readership. It has been growing in its circulation and has had some influence in current medical-moral debates. It has tried to educate our readership on these matters and has published articles which enliven, enhance and promote the spiritual and ethical stance of the medical practitioner and para-medical personnel.

However, the current medical-moral debates which try to elucidate the ethical concerns of society are highly controversial, passionate and sometimes polemical and divisive. Where is one to draw the line? This is the question to which there are no easy answers; hence the quandary, agony and suffering of an editor and editorial policy.

With candor, forethought and equanimity of mind and heart, we have posed this question to your board of directors and have had a reaffirmation of their attitude and guidance at our annual meetings.

Having been affirmed and encouraged to pursue this editorial policy, the editor ultimately comes down to Harry Truman's remark, "The buck stops here." Shall I accept or reject, send out for review, etc? I must confess that the process is difficult for a few manuscripts, easy for the majority and of no problem for another few. The personal judgment of the editor at acceptance or rejection and his basis for this is essentially intuitive and an amalgam of many influences. Perhaps the most crucial factor in regard to this is whether or not the article will be of help to the individual practitioner in rendering care to his patients. Secondly, will the article articulate lucidly the matter at hand and give him or her a philosophical, theological basis for conduct and thinking and be the basis for his or her advice on treatment or personal, ethical formation for himself and his relationship with his patients and his Creator? Underlying these value judgments is the ordinary magisterial teaching of the Church. However, the Church is quite careful in regard to its official teaching, and there arises the problem of responsible theological dissent. Where is one to go from there? This is where reliance upon the Spirit of Wisdom comes in for the editor. It is a gift that we cherish and seek with the veritable thirst of a panting deer being chased by hounds.

If I make this job sound too burdensome, I would like to reassure you of the strength and spiritual nourishment which I receive from the Author and Creator of us all, for I recall His words in time of trial and discouragement: "It was not you who chose Me, but I chose you." Or, in the words of Jahweh to the stammering Jeremiah, when He chose him to be His prophet: "Behold, I have put My words in your mouth." While it may seem somewhat egregious to compare oneself to a Jeremiah, I think it important to reflect upon our own lives and the influence of Christ in them and to receive inspiration to continue in

the work we have been called to do. It requires total honesty, true humility, hard work and reliance upon the grace given to us by the Divine Author and Spirit within us. As I reflect upon my own life as an internist, and see what my experience with innumerable patients has taught me, the strength of ordinary persons and their ability to arrive at earth-shaking decisions which are usually right never ceases to amaze me. I have learned so much from them as to what life is all about and how, in their own simple, intuitive way, they arrive at the most complex decisions with a minimum of advice from "experts."

Experiences like this, which we all share as physicians, are priceless, and it is humbling to know that we are privileged to share in them and have a role in helping them arrive at what is best for them. As we try to do our best, it is essential to remember the words of Christ, "I am the Vine, you are the branches," with all their literal meaning. If we ourselves are cut off from Christ, we cannot communicate Him to our patients in their difficult decisions. With these words in mind, let us surge further into the 1980's with hope, and pray that He will guide us in our relationship with our patients and represent to them in the fullest sense, Christ in all His loving kindness, consideration, compassion and care.

— John P. Mullooly, M.D.
Editor

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