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President's Page

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Gino G. Papola, M.D.

Recently the Board of Trustees of the American Medical Association proposed a new change in their policy on abortion, making abortion a decision between the patient and the physician. This means that if the House of Delegates meeting in Chicago in June adopt this proposal, abortion on demand will be the national policy of American medicine. Therefore the time honored Hippocratic Oath will no longer be the code of ethics of American medicine. What a tragedy this would be. The final sentence of this oath, used as the code of ethics by physicians since about 350 B.C., states, "While I continue to keep this oath inviolate, may it be granted to me to enjoy life and the practice of my art, *respected* always by all men, but should I trespass and violate this oath, may the reverse be my lot". There have been some in the past who have violated this oath, and have lost the respect not only of society but of their fellow colleagues. By asking the membership of the American Medical Association to violate this oath, the Board of Trustees and the House of Delegates, if they pass such a proposal now or in the future, are leading American medicine down the road to second class citizenship. How can there be respect for a physician's judgment when he prescribes treatment based solely on the wishes of his patient, with no respect for the rights of another life within that patient who is also the physician's patient? How can there be respect for physicians who destroy innocent life based solely on a woman's selfish wish rather than on sound medical judgment? How can there be respect for physicians who, once dedicated to the preservation of life, now become the technicians who destroy life? How can there be respect for physicians who become the pawns of politicians who try to solve the problems of the aged, of the poor, of the hungry and of the malformed by taking in their hands the right to decide who should live and who should die, which belongs only to Our Creator? How can

those of us, both Catholic and non-Catholic, respect an organization which makes its policy one that is completely opposed to our code of medical ethics and morals?

I hope that by the time this article reaches your desk, this law and inconceivable policy suggested by the Board of Trustees will have been turned down by those physicians of the A.M.A.'s House of Delegates who respect the right to life. I hope further that this abortion on demand policy will never become a part of the American Medical Association. For if it does, I fear that the next policy will be that of euthanasia, since there are already some rumblings in this direction. I therefore ask; is there a need for those who struggle daily to preserve life, to continue membership in the A.M.A. I think not, and when and if this cruel policy of murder is passed by the A.M.A., I hope those physicians who believe in the sanctity of life will join me in terminating membership in the American Medical Association. I also ask, is there a need for a strong Federation of Catholic Physicians? I think so. I hope all Catholic physicians will join together in a stronger Federation to uphold the principles of medical ethics and morals which have been our code, and therefore continue to earn the respect of society and the eternal blessings of Almighty God.

I would like in conclusion to ask that you support those organizing the XII International Congress of Catholic Physicians which will be held in Washington on October 11-14, 1970. A fine program is being put together with speakers from all over the world. We need your attendance to make it a success.

Gino G. Papola, M.D.
resident