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The President's Page: The Artificial Heart

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President's Page . . .



DR. O'LOUGHLIN

TODAY'S NEEDS

Today the requirements of God and of our fellowman are slightly different than they were when Christ addressed the wealthy young man who listened and became sad. They are somewhat different now than when Jean Read asked the Catholic Physicians Association for permission to help the struggling Guild of Catholic Physicians at the risk of her job. We owe her much, and we owe the CHA much. Our words can acknowledge our debt, but cannot repay it. Perhaps we have an opportunity to emulate her devoted service and to heed Christ's admonitions by trying to help the hospitals in their time of crisis. Perhaps we can repay that debt.

The sisters who "own" and "operate" the hospitals now realize that the community and the State have a great interest and concern and that the courts have actually raised the question of ownership and management of hospitals by the Religious. Governmental and quasi-governmental planning agencies set policy and determine action for the sisters in ways not always to their liking and possibly abhorrent to them. They often feel that their work is not needed and that their presence is not wanted. They did not join the orders to serve the wealthy. Although they have many real friends in the community, more informed support is desperately needed. We doctors can give it. We can be community representatives on hospital boards and trusts. We can and often have acted in our

own behalf as representatives of the medical staff. Our intelligent and strong support may prevent the sisters from abandoning the Conventional hospital mission in favor of more attractive and "relevant" ones.

The "relevant" needs of today cry out from every newspaper, magazine, and television set — The Urban crisis, The Poverty crisis, The Education crisis, The Racial crisis, The Ethics Crises, abortion, sterilization, euthanasia, genocide, The Youth Crisis, The Drug Crisis, The War. Committed and concerned, the conventional religious are understandably dubious about hospital mission at times like these. And in the face of governmental interference, is it any wonder that they look for other places to exercise their mission of love.

None in the above list of Crises is self-solving. None are diminishing. In fact, the campaign for abortion is heating up again, and the Guilds are becoming justifiably concerned. The Hippocratic, Pythagorean, Judeo-Christian medical tradition based on love of neighbor seems more Hypocritical in the light of today's depersonalization and dehumanization. We even see strong trends in this direction in the hospitals.

The visible presence of the sisters' love for God and fellowman and the deeply personal and humane environment that this can produce in a hospital is known to all. This exercise in stanching the flow of love from our society is most efficiently performed where it already has a foothold. I believe that we physicians can and should help the sisters in this inspired mission over and above and at the risk of our practices. Thus we can meet Christ's challenge and possibly repay Jean Reardon and the CHA for the lifesaving help they gave us not too many years ago.

B. J. O'Loughlin, M.D.