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President's Page: A New Ethic

Joseph M. Gambescia

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It is not easy to be humble, to accept a cross and see it as a blessing, as a means of salvation. When the 10 lepers were healed (and surely their leprosy was a cross for them), only one came back to Jesus and fell on his face at His feet giving Him thanks." It was then that Jesus made this startling statement to the foreigner who was cured: "Arise, go your way, for your faith has saved you." Who would ever think that a disease such as leprosy could be a blessing, an occasion for salvation?

When Simon of Cyrene was given the cross of Christ, little did he realize that his Calvary journey was related to all of humanity's redemption. As he witnessed the sufferings, falls, beatings and bleeding of an innocent man in pain, he was then closest to Christ our Redeemer. When listening to the jeers, sneers, curses and insults which were directed at the God-man, he was able, through his presence, to buffet the hurts and uplift the painful cross for the God of love.

Being close to the Savior, Simon was also next to the women standing nearby who expressed their warmth, sorrow and love to their God. As our Blessed Mother prayed, Simon became the beneficiary of her prayers, for he was the only person who physically relieved her Simon on that journey of torture. I wonder if onlookers recalled the words of Jesus, Who said, "Whoever gives a drink of cold water to the least of these My followers, because of Me, will certainly receive his reward" (Matt. 10:40). Who could possibly imagine Simon's reward?

Doctors, I see you as the athletes, the slaves, the Simon of today. God needs you. You are nearest to Jesus in the sick you serve, in the care you give them, in the cross you carry for them, and in the abuse you often are required to accept for them. How frequently unappreciative family members complain of your not "doing enough." How difficult the brothers in the legal profession can be in their accusations toward you, and how alone you stand with those who "cry death," wanting an abortion or mercy killing instead of accepting the cross and salvation.

Like St. Paul, you can rightfully say, "I have been crucified with Christ, and the life I live now is not my own; Christ is living in me. I still live my human life, but it is a life of faith in the Son of God Who loved me and gave Himself for Me" (Gal. 2:19).

— Msgr. Dino J. Lorenzetti

In September of 1970, the California Medical Journal editorialized about a new ethic for medicine and society. They took the position that the Judeo-Christian heritage, which was the basis of many of our laws and social mores, had lost its meaning in the face of technological advances and the social atmosphere of the modern world. Consequently the overriding reverence for life which was part of the heart of the Judeo-Christian "ethic" was to give way to a "quality of life" lifestyle which relegated to human life a relative and variable value.

The editorial was meticulous in avoidance of the word or even the concept of "religion," relegating everything to an ethic. Undoubtedly this mind-set, pervasive in America, had much to do with the Supreme Court's 1973 abortion decision.

The Judeo-Christian ethic proclaims God as creator of the universe and of man and as the Supreme Being. This new ethic is obviously a challenge to the Judeo-Christian God. In this secular ethic, God, at best, takes a back seat and He is treated in the main as though He does not exist. Thus, with such technological advances as have occurred and those which are perceived to be possible and man's ability to perform feats previously only dreamed of, the new ethic proclaims man as the measure of man. Science, at this time, projects a world without God.

In the July, 1983 issue of Pediatrics, a commentary by Peter Singer reveals the full aspect of the development of this new ethic and places the value of human life in its actual framework when viewed from the standpoint of this new ethic. It is obvious that he places science and religion on a collision course. I quote in part:
Once the religious mumbo-jumbo surrounding the term "human" has been stripped away, we may continue to see normal members of our species as possessing greater capacities of rationality, self-consciousness, communication, and so on, than members of any other species; but we will not regard as sacrosanct the life of each and every member of our species, no matter how limited its capacity for intelligent or even conscious life may be. If we compare a severely defective human infant with a nonhuman animal, a dog or pig, for example, we will often find the nonhuman to be superior in capacities, both actual and potential, for rationality, self-consciousness, communication, and anything else that can plausibly be considered morally significant. Only the fact that the defective infant is a member of the species Homo sapiens leads it to be treated differently from the dog or pig. Species membership alone, however, is not morally relevant.

It is evident that every effort is being made to separate not only the practice of medicine, but our entire way of life, from religion. We can safely say that we are being presented with a new religion wherein man is god.

Through the medium of Linacre Quarterly and our national conventions, we have pointed out that there is no contrariety between science and religion, but rather a "complementariness." We must continue to do this. Thus, the National Federation's role in placing religion in its proper place in the total care of the patient is paradoxical and pressing, as well as compelling. In the last presidential message (November, 1983), I noted that the Federation's role is a prophetic one. Now we see what we must pursue in this prophetic role.

The 1984 annual convention of the National Federation of Catholic Physicians will exert all its efforts to demonstrate the vital role that religion plays in the practice of medicine. Please set aside June to come to Philadelphia in October.

—Joseph M. Gambescia, M.D.

From the Editor's Desk

An Infamous Day

The following is the homily given by Doctor Mullooly at St. Jude Parish, Wauwatosa, Wisconsin on Jan. 22, 1984.

This day, January 22, we dedicate to the memory of the innocent humans who have been killed by abortion. It was on this day 11 years ago that the Supreme Court of the United States issued the decision which unleashed a holocaust on this nation, permitting abortion and depriving innocent life within the womb of existence. This day, as Franklin Delano Roosevelt said more than 40 years ago, will live in infamy for its callous disregard of our most defenseless creatures.

How are we, as Christians, to respond to this? The shocking, depressing statistics of abortion are well known to us. It is so disheartening to contemplate the horror of abortion that we do not like to discuss it. But discuss it we must. When Hitler unleashed his personal holocaust in World War II, the six million Jews who lost their lives must have wondered whether or not God cared for them to permit that to happen. The same is true of us today. How could an all-loving God let this holocaust go on in our very midst — a holocaust which accounts for more than one million lives lost per year in this United States?

We are dealing with problems of evil and sin, and it is only by confronting them that we find the answer. The world has been visited