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President's Page



When Much Is Given, Much Is Asked

"When much is given a man, much will be required of him. More will be asked of a man to whom more has been entrusted."

— Luke 12:47-48

Catholic physicians live their faith by the way they practice medicine. Abortion and infanticide are anathema. We favor dying in dignity, but not "death with dignity," defined as "the painless inducement of death" in House Bill No. 342 in 1975 in the Hawaii State Legislature (which "died" in committee).

We should not be intimidated by the "imposing your morality" mentality when the opportunity presents itself. It is not our morality, but God's moral code which we uphold to maintain the good name of medicine. It may be necessary to speak out with "meekness and great tact so as not to upset the other person, thus avoiding quarrels which cause nothing but bitterness and are more the result of attachment to one's own opinions than of a love for the truth" (St. Francis de Sales, *Spiritual Diary*, p. 14).

We exert our influence by serving on hospital and also medical society committees. The opinion of a practicing Catholic physician is respected. Let us not labor to be recognized, nor be afraid to be ridiculed, but act out of love for our patients and ultimately for the

love of God. "Love has no room for fear; rather, perfect love casts out all fear. And since fear has to do with punishment, love is not yet perfect in one who is afraid" (1 John 4:18).

Hospital ethics committees are formed to help resolve the complex problems brought about by modern medical technologies. Some feel that these committees may reduce the number of litigation against physicians and the hospital (American Society of Law and Medicine, meeting held in Houston, Texas, February, 1984). Catholic physicians should not hesitate to serve on these committees. They could be a constant reminder to the committee members that the principal reason for its existence is for the patient and to focus on the medical facts before considering the social and economic factors. Catholic physicians know that our patients are created by God and therefore have our respect. We are His instruments and whatever we possess in medicine is God's gift to us; how we use it is our gift to God.

To be influential in our environment, we must be knowledgeable and educate ourselves by reading, dialoguing with our colleagues or attending worthwhile meetings. To assist the physicians, nurses, hospital personnel, priests, religious, the laity, the National Federation of Catholic Physicians' Guilds have sponsored meetings of a medical-moral nature in various cities. This year, the 54th annual meeting will be held at the Hilton Hawaiian Village Hotel in Honolulu, Hawaii on Oct. 31, Nov. 1 and 2. The sessions will include: 1) In Vitro Fertilization 2) Death and Dying 3) Organ Transplantation and 4) Physician, Heal Thyself. On Nov. 3, 1985, an optional tour to Kalaupapa, Molokai is being planned. This is where Father Damien and Mother Marianne labored among the lepers.

God gave the Catholic physician the gift of helping the sick and helpless. Most of us were given the fringe benefits of a good and above average comfortable life style. We can go about our daily life like the servant who buried his master's coin in the ground and gave back the one coin on his return, or we can reach out to spread our Master's teaching, thereby influencing our medical environment with the "respect for life" ethic. Let all of our strivings be "directed towards enriching ourselves with merits so that we do not reach our final destination with nothing or with very little in our hands. Earn all we can. Let's not waste either time or energy or the qualities and gifts God has given us" (Rev. James Alberione, S.S.R., S.T.D.).

Hope to see you in Hawaii.

Aloha and God bless you.

Sincerely yours, in Christ,
Herbert M. Nakata, M.D.