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President's Page: Why a Catholic Physicians' Guild?

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President's Page



Why A Catholic Physicians' Guild?

As the Catholic physicians of America, we need to grow in the spirit of Christ in our personal and professional lives. It is necessary to bring His spirit to all that is touched by our science and art. We must bring leadership, knowledge, skill and experience in the area of medical-moral issues to our communities.

For those of us who have Catholic hospital affiliations or expect to do so in the future, it is necessary to highlight the place Catholic health facilities hold in today's society. They are witness to the saving presence of Christ and His Church in a variety of ways: by testifying to spiritual beliefs concerning life, suffering and death; by humble service to humanity and especially to the poor; by medical competence and leadership; and by fidelity to the Church's teachings, while ministering to the good of the whole person. So important is the spiritual welfare of the individual, that if institutions cannot maintain these principles, they have no justification for continuing their existence as Catholic facilities. They are not only accountable for the past, but also have special responsibilities toward the present and the future. A Catholic hospital or facility has the responsibility in conscience to prohibit procedures which are morally or spiritually harmful. Persons accepting board appointments, staff membership and employment must be made aware of these obligations which seek to protect the good of all patients.

As physicians, we must constantly remind ourselves of the moral principles which must be exercised regarding the sanctity of life, such as the special procedures concerned with reproduction and reproductive organs, and the religious care of patients. Our role is to follow the

principles of Catholicism and be leaders in our profession by promoting these ethical principles, including the areas of pro-life, anti-abortion, genetic counseling and organ transplant.

There is need for unification especially in this litigious society. The National Federation of Catholic Physicians' Guilds (NFCPG) is the vehicle for this unification. Your support is necessary for us to speak out for the Judeo-Christian principles in which we believe. As Catholic physicians, we must work together to develop deeper mutual support and understanding. One only has to read today's medical journals to see that the topic of medical ethics is a subject for concern. Through unification we can (must) be teachers of the highest principles in which we believe. We have been handicapped by many good physicians who, under pressure of practice and family obligations, have withdrawn into their small private professional lives. They have simply forgotten that a learned profession is an "organized calling" which, if it is to survive, will only survive collectively.

The NFCPG is ready to uphold its role in the struggle. We need your support and we appeal to you to join us in our work. Not everyone is in a position to give much of his time, but everyone is in a position to back up those who can. The NFCPG conducts an annual conference on medical-moral issues. We urge you to attend and participate in this important learning event. Please fill out the membership application on page 96 of this issue of the *Linacre Quarterly*.

References

1. Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Facilities. United States Catholic Conference, 1975.
2. Ratner, Herbert, M.D., Illinois, Personal communication.

**- Andrew J. Peters, M.D.
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