Doctor, Is There A Father In The Home?
Reverend John Tomasovich

The twist in the title of my talk this afternoon reminds me of another situation with an unusual ending. One day a teenage girl came into church during confession time. It was evident she was extremely nervous, and her prayers went something like this: "Dear Lord, I kissed a boy last night and I'm so ashamed of myself. I'm embarrassed and don't know how to tell this to father in confession. I'm afraid and I'm nervous. What am I to do?" In the meantime, sitting in the confessional was a newly ordained priest who was getting ready to experience his first afternoon of hearing confessions. He was also praying something like this: "Dear Lord, I'm nervous because this is the first time I will hear confessions. Help me not to say the wrong thing or give the wrong advice. Lord, don't let me forget the formula for confession. Don't send any difficult penitents today. Please help me because I am so nervous." Finally the young girl went into the confessional box and was waiting, with fear in her heart, for the slide to open. When father finally did open the slide, she barked out immediately: "Kiss me father, for I have sinned." To which he replied immediately, "How many times?"

However, this title does indicate that there exists a serious basic conflict of obligations in the life of every dedicated medical man. On one hand, by reason of his profession, he has an obligation to his patients. Having freely and willingly chosen a medical career, he must dedicate himself to the care and cure of all those who seek his help, who place themselves in his hands and seek him out demandingly, time after time. On the other hand, he has an obligation which not only entails the providing of food, clothing and education for his family, but, as head of the house, he owes the complete giving of himself, his love, affection and assistance, to his wife together with the care for and training of his children.

The problem stems from the sad fact that it is difficult to fulfill the obligation of a husband and father adequately, if he is absent from the family a greater part of the day practicing his vocation of healing. Here the conflict lies — How can he fulfill both these equally serious time and self-demanding obligations?

Let us examine some examples of this conflict in practice. A man knows that dedication to the cause of medicine is certainly a vocation. He knows further that this vocation will make many demands on his time and his talents, that he still often have to defer his personal wishes and desires for the good of his patients. But, before he has even finished medical school or internship, he makes another choice of vocation — that of marriage. So, he has assumed further obligations which are even more sacred and solemn, namely, to love and care for his wife and children and to prepare them for eternity. Both of these obligations are assumed in circumstances where their fulfillment is most difficult. The young medical student must give every minute of his time to prepare himself for the art of medicine, both in theory and in practice. As a resident he is "on call" frequently. In many instances, he will seek out as many added sources of income as possible in order to further support his family. This means his wife is home alone most of the time and her task becomes boring and even bothersome because she has no one to share her thoughts and feelings. When the doctor-father is home, he usually needs his rest or he must be left alone to study and read. This results in strain and tension which aggravates each other's feelings and leads to mutual blame and misunderstandings.

After a man arrives at an extensive practice, his position is in no way improved. He is so busy he is still not home much. His hours are irregular. It is difficult to make family plans and much needed recreation and social life are always in jeopardy of cancellation. This has a tendency to increase bickering which leads the doctor to seek escape in his practice. Now, we have a vicious circle. His colleagues and patients consider him a top man in his field, but his wife is unhappy, his children hardly know him and he spends most of his time either at the office or the hospital or the club.

What is the solution? I don't presume to present you with a simple answer, for I suspect that there is an analogy between the lives of priests and doctors. I secretly have the opinion that the Church enjoins celibacy on her priests because she knows they would make terrible husbands. Please don't conclude that I think all doctors make poor husbands. Rather, only if the problem is clearly understood and recognized as a problem both by the doctor and his wife, and can be discussed without anger, with patience, understanding and good will, some practical solution can be achieved. You know this because all of you here have wrested with this problem at one time or another.

I think there are two main considerations needed for the reconciliation of this two-fold obligation of the doctor and the father. First, he must completely understand his role of father and husband and, second, he must establish a correct sense of values in relation to his profession and his family.

What is the role of the father and husband? Well, the father can be considered a creator. The example of all Fatherhood is God, the Creator of His children to whom He continually manifests His loving providence. The mark of a true father is found in the conscious sense of his responsibility for the physical and spiritual well-being of his wife and children and his constant concern and loving solicitude for them. Further, his task is the creation of a Christian home-life for his family. He must decide where the family must live, how he shall provide for it, create the correct atmosphere that shall pervade Linacre Quarterly
the relationships of all those who are bound to his care.

The father can be considered also as a lover. St. Thomas gives the best working definition of what love is when he said, "to love is to will the good of the other." True love is not turned inward but is directed to others. The father must realize that he must act and live in such a way that the good and happiness of his wife and his children are his primary concern. This love must be a profound commitment for their good. This love must know no limit. The father will soon discover this as it must open up to the children born of his love for his wife. The child, in his earliest years will know only one thing—whether or not he himself is loved. This knowledge which flows into the baby's consciousness with the very milk it drinks, by the air that it breathes and the way it is handled, is crucial to the infant. We are told by psychologists that the physically and mentally healthy child is the child secure in the love of its parents and this pertains especially to the father. Love must be the motivating force of the husband's authority. His position as ruler of his home must be used always to achieve the family's highest possible good and not just his own good. The man who does not see his authority as essentially a means whereby he serves those under his rule neither knows what authority is nor deserves to have it.

A husband can be considered in the role of Christ. In the fifth chapter in St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians we read "the man is the head to which the woman's body is united, just as Christ is the head of the Church, He, the Savior, on whom the safety of his body depends; and the woman must owe obedience at all points to her husband as the Church does to Christ." This obedience of the wife is not based upon fear but flows from her relationship with her husband. The husband has a responsibility of guarding and caring for his life; he is dependent upon him. The ultimate meaning of the wife's obedience and the husband's headship is that the marriage of man and wife images the eternal unity of Christ and His Church. Wifely obedience is nothing else but holy love. A woman who can rely upon her husband is a woman liberated from a man's responsibility and is free to be more fully a wife. Indeed, if a woman does not know this submission then she is unprepared to be a woman and her husband, for an act of wifely love, remains unfulfilled as a woman and her husband, for an act of a wife's love, will remain stunted in his growth as a man. The husband is Christ-like by being unhesitatingly selfless. Remember this, the material things of this world are far less important to a woman than the knowledge that she is loved, wanted, needed by her husband. Only in the security of her knowledge can she give totally of herself. The more perfectly a husband identifies the headship of his family with the headship of Christ, the more he strives to protect himself, to pattern himself and his living after Christ, the more perfectly will his marriage image the union of Christ and His Church.

The father can also be considered as a priest and his family can be called "ecclesia domestica" . . . "a family church" to which he ministers. Although you are aware of a sharing in the Priesthood of Christ by reason of baptism and confirmation, this is also true in a particular manner through your sacrament of matrimony. The father is the spiritual leader of his family-community and shares, in common with the priests of the church, the responsibilities of teacher and caretaker of the souls within this community. This ministry of teaching and care is to be manifested not only in words but pre-eminently by attitude and action. At this point, may I suggest a simple and beautiful custom for you, fathers, the custom of giving the parental blessing to your children each night after their evening prayers. This can be done simply by making the sign of the cross on the forehead of each child and saying words to this effect: "I bless you and may God keep you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen." This simple practice certainly will have a double salutary effect, on the father because it will be a constant reminder to fulfill his role ever more perfectly, and, on the children, because it will dignify their lives. This is certainly a wonderful exercise of the lay priesthood.

The father is also the breadwinner of his family. Everyone usually understands this evident aspect of fatherhood. It is my opinion that most doctors sin in this manner more from excess than from neglect. Maybe it is psychologically resultant from so many years of striving and sacrifice. Nevertheless, it can quite easily happen that the doctor, as a father, can become only the person who pays the bills. While a father is morally bound to provide for his family, to meet their real needs, he must not so exalt his talents, to exhaust his powers, to strive for all the unneeded luxuries and, thereby, neglect the spiritual welfare of those to whom he is irrevocably bound. A father must not attribute to money a power it does not have—the power to fill the emptiness created in the human soul when love is absent.

These thoughts on fatherhood, if remembered, certainly will help to ease the tension that exists between the roles of doctor and father.

In the second place, I mentioned above there is a need to set up a right order of values of what comes first in your life. Is there an order of precedence? There certainly is—GOD - FAMILY - MEDICINE. God comes first because He is the ultimate end and goal of the Christian life. The family is second to God. The father will achieve his union with God in relation to how well he fulfills his vocation as father. The vocation of medicine, a vocation within a vocation, then follows as a means of helping him to attain the first two goals. Therefore, the practice of medicine must be a help rather than a hindrance in his orientation to God and to his family. To understand this order of values will not automatically solve this problem in practice, but it will solve this conflict in the mind and this is
There is no doubt that there must be a father in the house, though not a doctor. In order to rise to a fulfillment of this vocation, you must often reassess the meaning of brotherhood and its importance, and pray for the courage, wisdom and grace to incarnate that meaning in your self for your family.

This is an address given by Fatimah Tomasovich to the Catholic Physicians Guild of New Orleans at a Brunch following the White Mass last year.

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**Medicine And The New Programs**

**For Catastrophic Illness**

MICHAEL J. BRENNAN, M.D., F.A.C.P.

Sometimes in looking at the future it helps a little to look at the past, inasmuch as one can think of the future as a projection or outgrowth of the past.

Dualisms have a way of arising out of every kind of analytical discourse. Something fundamental in the mode of operation of the rational intellect appears to make them inevitable; self and non-self, spirit and matter, matter and anti-matter in modern physics, health and illness, life and death, statism and freedom, stimulus and response, good and evil. These are all examples of that polarization toward which logical analysis, beginning with the observation of disparities in nature, seems inevitably impelled.

Among the Greeks two gods of the mind were recognized. Apollo was the deity of thought, of the rational intellect; Dionysius was the god of the instinctual, the aesthetic, the intuitive, manifestations of the mind. Greeks, carrying in their veins from Indic origins a certain large tolerance for apparent opposites, worshipped both, practiced rites and regimens of life aimed at giving play now at one time to one way of behavior, and now to the other.

Æsculapius was the son of Apollo, born in tragedy when his father delivered him by cesarean section from the womb of his dead mother, Coronis. Medicine as such was conceived of, then, as an Apolloean art from the very beginning, a work of the practical, rational intellect.

However, it was not the disciples of Apollo alone who gave us the medicine of the modern world. The mind of Galen may have been reasonable, indeed, when he made his reputed departure from Rome during an epidemic of bubonic plague. But it did not contain, nor had that of Hippocrates before it, the full glory of what we can see in the lives of Reed, Ricketts, Zinsser, and a host of others from the past; or of Schweitzer and Dooley in our time. These men inherited something from the mother of Æsculapius as well as from his father, and she was a child of Dionysius, a nymph and lover. Guy de Chauliac, unlike Galen, never left his post when the plague took 25 million lives in Europe in the mid-fourteenth century in a period of three years. He had learned his conception of duty not only from Hippocrates but from Benedict as well, whose loving response to sickness and poverty had been the foundation of the first hospitals of hospitality. Not physicians, sons of Apollo, but sons of Dionysius, men of religious and compassionate commitment, gave us hospitals. And the Lord knows that the best of these institutions faithfully preserve in many of these ways,