May 1978

Message From the Spiritual Advisor

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Recommended Citation
Available at: http://epublications.marquette.edu/lnq/vol45/iss2/2
To be a Catholic physician in today’s society, one is usually an unsung hero, upholding high values of his vocation and confronting the challenges of pragmatism, which encourage the disposition of anything unwanted.

In order to be this ideal physician, it becomes necessary not only to be close to Christ, but in fact united with Him. St. Luke, the physician and evangelist, tells us in his sixth chapter that when Jesus was in the Synagogue on the Sabbath to teach He restored the withered right hand of a man there present so that it was as sound as his other one. The Scribes and Pharisees were “filled with fury, and began to discuss among themselves what they should do to Jesus.” The very next sequence in the Scriptures is that Jesus “went out to the mountain to pray.”

The Catholic physician imitating Jesus must find time in the course of his hectic day to retreat from his vocation of healing and pray — be refreshed, renewed, strengthened, so as to continue his apostolate of being Christ-like.

Recently, one of our Buffalo physicians was asked by some local medical students at a seminar: “When do you find time to pray?” His answer is worth reflecting — for he said “My whole life is a prayer.” He continued by commenting that when he retires and examines his conscience, should he find that he was selfish and working for the wrong objectives, he asks God for forgiveness and strength so that he may do better the following day.

At the XIV World Congress of the International Federation of Catholic Medical Associations in Bombay this past February, Mother Teresa of Calcutta told this story from her many daily experiences:

A woman who was dying on one of the many busy streets in India was picked up to prepare for death. Mother asked herself, “I wonder what I would say if I were she? Would I have complained about the way I was
treated — not having been given food, medicine, clothing or shelter?" While reflecting on these personal thoughts, the woman looked at her lovingly, said "Thank you" and died. Her very last breath was a gift — she gave all that she had.

"Thanks" is an abbreviation for the word Thanksgiving, which means Eucharist. The Catholic physician is a Eucharistic physician. He literally consumes himself giving totally in love for his fellowman. In the Eucharist, Jesus shares an intimacy with His loved ones. The Eucharistic physician does the same. He becomes a living symbol, a sacramental sign, not apart from the people, but stands out among them. Jesus said "This is My Body — given up for you." Is not the Eucharistic doctor finding himself doing likewise? By living his vocation, he gives witness to the reality of Christian love.

Becoming a Eucharistic physician does not happen overnight. This growth does not occur by one's willing it. It must be worked out, it means being put to the test, being subjected to "cheap abuse," "sacrifice," and often a target for great "financial loss."

Faith is something more than simply adhering to the word of God; it is an investment of total surrender to Christ's love. Being conscious of this, the physician must continually reflect on who he is and what it is that he is doing. For if he dwells in love of Christ, he can be assured of this blessing:

"If you dwell in me, and my words dwell in you, ask what you will and you shall have it. This is my Father's glory that you may bear fruit in plenty and so be my disciple. As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you."

The Catholic physician (like Christ) may not be looked upon as a "winner." But those who have Faith know differently.

— Rev. Msgr. Dino J. Lorenzetti