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Letters to the Editor ...  

Catholic Physicians' Guild

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Message From The Spiritual Advisor . . .
A Question of the Imposition of Values

Dear Friends:

As a people we are caught in a controversy that is most serious. The abortion issue strikes at the very heart of the quality not merely the quantity of human life. Where quality is concerned — values are implied. "YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO FORCE YOUR VALUE SYSTEM ON ANOTHER," pro-abortionists will claim.

Who says?

First, is it really a question of "imposition of Values"? Or is it rather pointing to values already imposed? Is LIFE valuable? What is its value? Is it possible to add to its value by its destruction? Is the fifth commandment an imposition? Whose?

Would we stop a suicide attempt? Would we call a halt (even forcibly) to a cannibalistic banquet? Would we chase a thief? Are we imposing values? Is it then a question of imposition of values on others? Or isn't there a point somewhere beyond which individuals have not only the right but the obligation to speak out and to act out (peaceably) in favor of what is clearly right and against an allowance which would be seriously detrimental to the common good, as well as destructive to the individual life.

Laws are written for the common good. It may not be an individual matter at all. No more than promoting suicide would be. No more than legalizing cannibalism would be. No more than licensing stealing would be. The abortion issue will have repercussions at a "people level" and our nation itself may be well nurturing the seed of self-ruination. Though it may never be right to impose values, is this not certainly always wrong: the failure to make values known and heard? For us to remain silent or inactive would be to contribute to COMMON EVIL. And should legislation be enacted over our voice — should we fail to be heard — wherein is the failure? They alone have truly failed, who have failed to speak.

If the creation is to move ever toward the perfection of the Creator, it is for some to point the way . . . not "their" way but a way clearly made known by Him. Continue to make your voice (rather, His voice) heard. May the Spirit direct!

Father Charles Scherer

Letters to the Editor . . .

DIALOGUE CONTINUES

To the Editor:
I wish to take this opportunity to thank Father McCormick both for his contribution to the May 1972 issue of TLQ and for having taken further time from his busy schedule to have answered my critique of his America article.

I think Father is correct in assuming that the reflections I expressed are shared by other physicians and perhaps at some later date, in a more tightly reasoned article. I shall be more adequate to the task of expressing the view of those of us who tend to be theologically traditional and philosophically neo- scholastic in the area of medical morality.

Till then, again I express my sincere appreciation to Father McCormick for having acknowledged my statement. I for one will continue to follow avidly his invaluable moral notes in the Theological Studies and I strongly urge others to do the same.

Sincerely,
Vitale H. Paganelli, M.D.
66 Park St.
Glens Falls, N. Y. 12801

CONGRATULATIONS FROM TAIWAN

To the Editor:
My heartfelt congratulations to Dr. John J. Brennan for his courageous, positive and fully Christian address (Linacre Quarterly, Feb. 1972)! We have been hearing too many purely negative talks with regard to the National Birth Regulation methods. But the question is: What will you DO to help those people who need birth regulation? — many of whom don't want to use pills, or IUD . . . simply out of fear, if not for ethical reasons. This is especially true here in Taiwan and in some other developing countries. Let all remember the words of our Lord, "As long as you did not do it for one of these least ones, you did not do it for me." We need desperately good saviors like Drs. John & Lyn Billings, Dr. John J. Brennan and many devoted doctors of your Catholic Physicians' Guilds.

Simon Chin, S.J.
Associated Professor
Faculty of Theology
Fu Jen Catholic University

THE RIGHT TO HEALTH CARE

To the Editor:
Please stop playing semantic games with the words "rights" and "duties", etc. I may have an obligation in Christian charity to treat the sick who cannot pay me. but they certainly cannot have a right to my services. If they do, neither of us is free or capable of giving or receiving Christian charity. I agree entirely with Dr. Sade. You cannot have it both ways. I cannot give true Christian charity if the recipient has a "right" to that gift. Your semantic publum de-humanizes both of us.

Lyle C. Vogel, M.D.
Orange, California

August, 1972
**THE DIRECTIVES: A CRISIS OF FAITH**

**Thomas J. O'Donnell, S.J.**

A storm of violent criticism has broken on the American health and hospital scene on the occasion of the approval, by the Bishops of the United States—last November—of the new Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Facilities. The Directives are being criticized as being mean-

Father O'Donnell responds to the current criticism of the new Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Facilities. He reviews some of the frequently stated criticisms of the Code and concludes that within the controversy "the basic issue is faith in the Church," particularly its teaching regarding contraception and abortion.

Father O'Donnell is a medico-

moral consultant for Linacre Quarterly.

ingless for our modern day, as hopelessly ill-suited to the ecumenical dimension of our pluralistic society, of being irrelevant regarding what the Catholic hospital should or should not do and beyond the scope of what the American hierarchy should or should not teach.

A proper perspective demands the initial consideration of one very important fact underlying the whole issue—namely: that the controversy is not really (or at most only very partially) about the Directives at all. The controversy is basically about the teaching of the Catholic Church on abortion and contraception. The publication of the Directives has served as a convenient and more comfortable focus of exacerbation. Perhaps it seems somehow ecclesiastically safer to attack just the American bishops rather than the entire teaching authority of the Church itself.

To even begin to assess this situation, we must first look at the Directives themselves. The criticism that is launched at them in general really concerns only a very few specific points, and these are items which did not originate with the Directives, but are only borrowed and brought in.

We are talking about a document made up of a preamble of eight paragraphs and 43 specific directives.

Of the eight paragraphs of the preamble, the first two recall the highest ideals of the Christian witness in the care of the sick: to carry into their lives the saving presence of Christ—to see life, and suffering, and death in the light of redemptive love—to see the patient as a whole person, and not just as a pathology—to be dedicated to the humble service of humanity and especially to the poor—and to continue to study and evaluate new medical procedures in the context of Christian moral goodness. Surely it is not ideals such as these which make the Directives so inept and useless.

What makes the preamble so bad in the eyes of its critics seems to me, in all honesty, to be just two