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President's Page

Gino G. Papola

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Recently the Board of Trustees of the American Medical Association proposed a new change in their policy on abortion, making abortion a decision between the patient and the physician. This means that if the House of Delegates meeting in Chicago in June adopt this proposal, abortion on demand will be the national policy of American medicine. Therefore the time honored Hippocratic Oath will no longer be the code of ethics of American medicine. What a tragedy this would be. The final sentence of this oath, used as the code of ethics by physicians since about 350 B.C., states, “While I continue to keep this oath inviolate, may it be granted to me to enjoy life and the practice of my art, respected always by all men, but should I trespass and violate this oath, may the reverse be my lot”. There have been some in the past who have violated this oath, and have lost the respect not only of society but of their fellow colleagues. By asking the membership of the American Medical Association to violate this oath, the Board of Trustees and the House of Delegates, if they pass such a proposal now or in the future, are leading American medicine down the road to second class citizenship. How can there be respect for a physician’s judgment when he prescribes treatment based solely on the wishes of his patient, with no respect for the rights of another life within that patient who is also the physician’s patient? How can there be respect for physicians who, once dedicated to the preservation of life, now become the technicians who destroy life? How can there be respect for physicians who become the pawns of politicians who try to solve the problems of the aged, of the poor, of the hungry and of the malformed by taking in their hands the right to decide who should live and who should die, which belongs only to Our Creator? How can
those of us, both Catholic and non-Catholic, respect an organization which makes its policy one that is completely opposed to our code of medical ethics and morals?

I hope that by the time this article reaches your desk, this new and inconceivable policy suggested by the Board of Trustees will have been turned down by those physicians of the A.M.A.'s House of Delegates who respect the right to life. I hope further that this abortion on demand policy will never become a part of the American Medical Association. For if it does, I fear that the next policy will be that of euthanasia, since there are rumblings in this direction.

I therefore ask; is there a need for those who struggle daily to preserve life, to continue membership in the A.M.A. I think not, and when and if this cruel policy of murder is passed by the A.M.A., I hope those physicians who believe in the sanctity of life will join me in terminating membership in the American Medical Association. I also ask, is there a need for a strong Federation of Catholic Physicians? I think so. And I hope all Catholic physicians will join together in a stronger Federation to uphold the principles of medical ethics and morals which have been our guide, and therefore continue to earn the respect of society and the eternal blessings of Almighty God.

I would like in conclusion to ask that you support those organizing the XII International Congress of Catholic Physicians which will be held in Washington on October 11-14, 1970. A fine program is being put together with speakers from all over the world. We need your attendance to make it a success.

Gino G. Paolillo, M.D.
President

From The Editor's Desk:

These thoughts are being written just prior to the annual meeting of the National Federation of Catholic Physicians and the American Medical Association in Chicago in June, 1970. This period is rather discouraging and disheartening for the American doctor. With utter misgivings and dismay did we read in the A.M.A. News (May 25, 1970) of the decision of the AMA Board of Trustees to submit to the House of Delegates a new policy on abortion, namely, to allow the decision to be made by the physician and the patient. We have no way of knowing how the House of Delegates will vote on this "abortion on demand" proposal but the very fact that the A.M.A. Board of Trustees would propose such a radical departure from the traditional moral and ethical principles for which medicine has stood for so many centuries raises some serious questions as to the leadership capabilities of the American Medical Association. The American Medical Association has been under attack from various quarters for some period of time. It has been accused of being indifferent to the health needs of the poor, the underprivileged, the under-trodden. It has been accused of being callous and obdurate in the face of great human needs. Does the American Medical Association and its Board of Trustees wish to add further fuel to the fire of its critics by officially forsaking the most innocent and defenseless member of society, the unborn child, by adopting the abortion on demand policy?

Regardless of the action of the House of Delegates on the AMA Board of Trustees' proposal, the individual physician must seriously re-evaluate his own convictions in regard to the AMA. How can one seriously support and belong to a group whose leadership takes a position which invites its member to flagrantly violate the Hippocratic Oath? It seems to us that the American doctor is being ill served by its Board of Trustees and that this same Board is sowing the seeds of destruction of the AMA by attempting to create conditions which violate the spiritual teaching of the Church. This abdication of principle which is quite evident in the Board of Trustees' proposal brings home to us with prudence the vital necessity of a strong, independent National Federation of Catholic Physicians. Many of our non-Catholic medical colleagues are appalled at this cavalier proposal of the AMA Board and they are encouraged by our forthright, unequivocal stand on the sacredness and inviolability of the unborn child's right to life.

Let us continue in our efforts to remind the nation and the world of the sacredness of human life and of the doctor's duty to preserve life and not destroy it.

John P. Mullally, M.D.