Introduction

Special issue on Catholic social teaching and healthcare reform: An introduction

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It was with great joy and eager anticipation that we accepted the invitation to be guest editors for this issue of *The Linacre Quarterly* devoted to healthcare reform based upon the fundamental principles of Catholic teaching. The Catholic Medical Association has long been aware of the need to reform the healthcare delivery system in the United States and published its first comprehensive document on the subject in the May 2005 issue of the *Linacre* titled, “Health Care in America: A Catholic Proposal for Renewal.”

A decade later, although the content and recommendations made in that initial work are still valid and applicable today, it is in need of updating in light of the many changes made in the health sector since then, particularly the passage of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA). Unfortunately, while many Catholic leaders supported passage of the PPACA hoping to achieve the laudable goal of universal access to health care, the reality six years later is an even more dysfunctional system of healthcare delivery that is neither more affordable or universally accessible and which imposes the provision of many unethical procedures in

health plans against the consciences of many physicians and to the detriment of their patients. Insurance premiums are rising, state exchanges are failing and virtually every promise made to the American people about the wonderful benefits of the PPACA has been broken. It is no wonder that many, if not most people, see no solution other than the single payer, government/corporate controlled system now being proposed.

We cannot permit that recommendation to be implemented unopposed. We must offer reasonable alternate proposals that promote authentic reform upholding the dignity of every human being, the sanctity of the doctor–patient relationship, and the common good.

But is this possible? The answer is a resounding *Yes!*

What is needed is the further development of recommendations and specific policy proposals based upon sound principles contained in the social doctrine of the Church. This issue of the *Linacre* is a continuation of that process begun a decade ago, and now we must advance the work in cooperation with our bishops, physicians, and other healthcare professionals, administrators, lawyers,

businessmen, legislators, policy analysts, economists, and others to implement these recommendations and those yet to be developed.

To this end a healthcare forum was convened by the Catholic Medical Association in Washington, D.C., earlier this year and dozens of Catholic leaders in these various disciplines discussed the practical implications of developing a Catholic healthcare program designed to achieve the goals outlined above and those throughout the articles in this edition of the *Linacre*.

To restore the integrity of our profession and to rebuild the culture of life in health care requires a vision of Catholic medicine founded on the moral and social doctrine of the Church.

The following excerpt from the 2005 Catholic Medical Association document on healthcare reform provides that vision and a framework within which to carry on the mission of Catholic health care founded by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,

From the smallest medical office to the largest hospital, the metaphysical symmetry of Catholic medicine can be glimpsed, just as it is present in cathedrals and basilicas. Jesus Christ is the cornerstone. The pillars are those of subsidiarity, solidarity, the sanctity of human life, and virtue. The floor is justice, and the light that fills its space is charity, by which all that occurs there is illuminated. The whole of the structure gives rise to the common good. In the many such structures that have been and are yet to be built, subsidiarity has a hand in their framing and dispersion. Solidarity is found in the doors that are open to all, the sanctity of life in the inestimable

value that is recognized in all. (CMA 2005, 101)

We invite all of good will to contribute to this grand initiative beginning by reading and critically analyzing the articles and the ideas presented in this issue of the *Linacre* as well as to those due to be published in the February issue. Then consider how you might join us and contribute to the authentic reform of medicine and our healthcare delivery system in whatever discipline you work. Together we can, we must restore the Judeo-Christian and Hippocratic principles to the medical profession that have guided healthcare practitioners in their service to the sick, suffering, and dying for over two millennia.

God bless.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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REFERENCE

- Catholic Medical Association (CMA). 2005. Health care in America: A Catholic Proposal for Renewal. *Linacre Quarterly* 72, no. 2 (May): 92–122.