

A SPIRITUAL REFLECTION FOR CATHOLICS IN HEALTH CARE

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In your daily activity, you are constantly placing your academic preparation, the advantages of scientific research and technology, as well as your personal expertise and experience at the service of those in need of healing. And we know that it is not only physical healing that people seek but also spiritual healing.

Your professional activities bring you face to face with all the problems of human suffering and, ultimately, with the mystery of 'evil' in the world. Human reason can only offer tentative answers to these fundamental and existential problems. Faith, however, allows us a deeper insight and understanding. Even though we cannot eliminate human suffering, faith in God's love offers us the strength to face it more serenely both as clinicians and patients.

In your dealings with your patients, there needs to be a certain analogy to priests offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Your patient is a person created in the image of God. He or she is in search of healing through your hands, but, even more so, through the Christian love with which you listen, care for and follow that person. As clinicians, you are ministering to the broken body of Our Lord on the Cross. This is analogous to the priest offering the 'broken' eucharistic Body of Christ.

Christians have often been accused of indifference toward earthly projects and social reform. A deeper look at history shows that the exact opposite is true because the dignity of creation and of the human body demands that we make the world a better place. We have to treat the human body with immense respect. That is your task as clinicians. Your mission is to practice your science for the benefit of our brothers and sisters.

Jesus shows us the true meaning of life as a gift. He is the Son who receives His life from the Father and He gives it back to the Father. His loving obedience frees us from the dominion of death and we are born to new life on the Cross. The crucified and risen Christ is the true meaning of our life and the guarantee of our resurrection. Recently, a young girl who died just before celebrating her nineteenth birthday was beatified. Her name is Chiara Badano and she spent the last two years of her short life in a hospital bed, suffering from bone cancer. Pope Benedict has presented her as a ray of light to everyone because, in Italian, she is Chiara Luce, radiant light. Blessed Chiara understood that she could offer her broken body to God, out of love, while at the same time finding enough strength to show her concern for those around her. One of the doctors treating her, a non-believer, understood that Chiara had found a deeper meaning in life, a cause truly worth living for. Better still, we can say that she had found a love worth dying for because love is always stronger than death.

It is God's love that gives meaning and an eternal value to our bodies and to all our actions, from the most heroic to the most routine. Through the intercession of your holy Patron Saints, Luke, Cosmas and Damien, may all your actions in favour of the sick and needy give you the



opportunity to communicate the healing power of God's love. May the Blessed Virgin Mary, Health of the Sick, keep you all under her loving maternal care.

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