



Photo by Susan McKinney

Boo!

Modeling the latest in Halloween fashions at a costume party given by the South-west Golden Age Group at 34 Monica St. are [left to right] Lily MacDonald, Jennie Miglio, Loretta Doody, Mrs. Michael O'Brien, Joe Grube and Mary Harrington.

Care for the Dying . . . Moral Issues Aired

St. Louis [RNS] — In weighing the moral issues involved in care for the dying, there is a significant moral difference between deliberately allowing death to come and actively accomplishing that end, a nationally known moral theologian suggested here.

In a formal treatise on "Care for the Dying Patient," delivered at St. Louis University, Father Richard C. McCormick, SJ, indicated that it is morally permissible to withdraw the medicines and machines and allow a terminally ill patient to die.

However, he continued, it is morally "disproportionate to the benefits" to perform acts directly intended to terminate life.

Father McCormick, a professor at the Bellarmine School of Theology, Chicago, and a past president of the Catholic Theological Society of America, developed his thesis for the annual Hillenbrand Lecture, a series memorializing a St. Louis U. student who died shortly after his 1966 graduation.

The lecture will be published in the Winter issue of Theology Digest, published by Jesuits here.

Addressing some 450 priests, medical professionals and other laity and religious, Father McCormick said that care for the doomed patient, while only one of many medical-moral issues, is a central one. "The way we decide this issue will determine the way we deal with future medical-moral problems," he declared.

Complicating the issue, he noted, is the availability of so many life-extending techniques. With such devices as heart and lung machines, kidney machines, electronic stimulators, and the like, he asked, "is it possible to speak of 'natural' death?" And the responsibility conferred by such technology raises the next question: Is it wrong to hasten death?

Father McCormick, after reviewing the approaches offered by other theologians — Joseph Fletcher, Paul Ramsey of Princeton and Father Charles Curran of Catholic University — developed his own view.

Fundamentally, "the issue is not whether suicide and killing are wrong. We maintain a basic moral commitment" that eliminates these alternatives he said.

But the problem occurs, for example, in an elderly patient

with inoperable cancer, and having a life expectancy of several more months, who suddenly has a heart attack. He admitted that this is "the exceptional situation, the tough situation, where values clash."

In this and similar situations, he continued, "the reasonable thing is to avail ourselves of the greater good, and to avoid the greater evil."

"What this means is that there is a reason for allowing a patient to die. There is no reason, however, to dispatch a terminal patient," he said.

The moral theologian rejected what he termed "vitalism," the approach which preserves simply physiological functioning regardless of cost or condition. Prolongation of life can be halted, and death can be allowed to occur "because human life calls for different attitudes at different stages . . . There is a point at which, for the good of the patient and for all concerned, death can be allowed to occur," he said.

The alternative, the deliberate and direct termination of life, has to face "the crucial question: is it to the good of the patient?" His own opinion, Father McCormick said, is that direct termination is unjustified.

The problems with direct termination, with euthanasia, are illustrated by the possible consequences, he said. These range from diminished trust in doctors up to the imprecations of insurance policy beneficiaries. "There are, I believe, problems that do not arise when death is simply allowed to occur."

Because direct termination "is disproportionate to the benefits to be derived," moralists and others "must maintain a moral difference" between permitting death, and actively causing it, he concluded.

TRAVELING CHORUS

The Rochester Saenger Youth Chorus is looking for young people interested in a European concert trip during the summer of 1974. The chorus, directed by Harold Tausch, is open to singers 14 years old through college age. This will be their fifth European tour. Those interested may call 671-1594 for further information, or attend the auditions Nov. 4th from 3 to 5 p.m. at the Labor Lyceum, 580 St. Paul Street, Rochester.

ORATORIO SOCIETY

Belshazzar's Feast by Sir William Walton will be performed by the Rochester Oratorio Society at its Fall concert Sunday, Nov. 18, at the Eastman Theatre. Rachmaninoff's The Bells and Serenade to Music by Ralph Vaughan Williams will complete the program.

The 300-voice chorus will be

accompanied by the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra. Solo parts will be sung by Susan Blum, John Densison and Richard Allen, all connected with the Eastman School of Music. Theodore Hollenbach, who has been the society's director and conductor since its beginning in 1945, will be on the podium.

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