

Compassion in medicine: Catholic Physicians' Guild



Dr. Robert Joynt, dean of the University of Rochester Medical School, addresses guild members and guests during the dinner at the Genesee Plaza Holiday Inn, while Bishop Matthew H. Clark and Mrs. Joynt anticipate his next humorous comment.

Jeff Goulding/Courier-Journal

The gospel story of Jesus healing the deaf-mute set the tone for the inaugural Mass of the Catholic Physicians' Guild of the Diocese of Rochester Saturday, Sept. 7, in the chapel of St. Mary's Hospital. The homily by presiding celebrant Bishop Matthew H. Clark elaborated on the theme of Jesus' compassion and healing touch to those in physical or spiritual pain. Bishop Clark spoke of the dedication of the physicians gathered in the chapel to bringing compassion to those they treat and creating wholeness.

The keynote speaker for the dinner at the Genesee Plaza Holiday Inn was Dr. Robert Joynt, dean of the University of Rochester Medical School. Dr. Joynt took a humorous approach to delivering his message on the need for compassion in medicine. "Jesus was clearly in violation of New York state statutes by practicing medicine without a license," he noted, adding the question: "Do we as physicians not suffer from the opposite problem of practicing without the attributes of Jesus?"

Dr. Joynt spoke of an attitude among some physicians that has been termed the "omnipotence syndrome" — becoming self-impressed and detached from the pro-

blems of patients. "We as Catholic physicians have to remind ourselves of this," he said, noting that Catholic physicians have the advantage of their faith to help them to perceive the divine presence in every man and to touch people with compassion in their time of need.

Physicians have a special covenant with their patients, he said. "We hear what people wouldn't tell any other and demand things of people that they accept on blind faith." He added that Catholic physicians like himself who are involved in teaching young doctors have an additional calling to be models for young students and exemplify the teaching methods of Jesus. "If we institute our faith and our beliefs in our practices, we will accomplish that," he said. "We will teach the humanness of medicine."

In his closing remarks, Bishop Clark stressed the diocese's support for the guild, whose officers are: president, Dr. Fernando Ona (a permanent deacon in the diocese); vice president, Dr. Richard Brzustowicz; secretary, Dr. Marjanne Crino; and treasurer, Dr. Thomas Sweeney. Moderator for the guild is Father Donald Schwab, chaplain at Rochester General Hospital.



Father Donald Schwab, Bishop Clark and guild president, Dr. Fernando Ona (a permanent deacon), offer the Eucharist in the chapel in St. Mary's Hospital.



Jane Carpenter, Eric Ona and Mel Ona provide musical accompaniment for the hymns during the Saturday evening Mass.

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