

Local Guild of Catholic Medical Association Active in Fort Wayne Area

FORT WAYNE — Late last summer Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades convened a group of Fort Wayne Catholic physicians to discuss the possibility of launching a local organization of Catholic physicians and other healthcare professionals, said Lisa Everett, co-director of the Family Life Office for the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. A few of the physicians, in fact, also had a desire to launch a local guild of the Catholic Medical Association (CMA). “I think this convergence was the work of the Holy Spirit,” Everett added.

Following the meeting, Bishop Rhoades asked Everett to serve as a liaison between the diocese and the core group in getting the guild started. Under the auspices of the diocese, the local CMA guild has been meeting monthly, she reported, establishing a board and electing officers last November. They chose as their patron a pro-life Catholic geneticist whose cause for canonization has begun, naming the new group the Dr. Jerome Lejeune Guild of Northeast Indiana.

The guild includes the eastern half of the diocese. Bishop Rhoades hopes to establish a separate guild for the western half of the diocese based out of South Bend.

Dr. Tom McGovern, partner and part owner of Fort Wayne Dermatology Consultants, serves as president of the Dr. Lejeune Guild while Dr. Kate Heimann, whose practice is in Decatur, heads the vice-presidency.

“Both are strongly committed Catholics with a desire to evangelize the culture of their fellow Catholic healthcare professionals,” said Everett. Bishop Rhoades also appointed Father James Bromwich, who has a background in healthcare, as chaplain of the new guild.

According to Dr. McGovern, the guild wants to “establish camaraderie among Catholic physicians and other healthcare workers in the midst of the secular culture of death,” forming them in their Catholic faith. The guild also wants to “help Catholic physicians know, understand and apply Church teaching in their professions and educate the public about how Catholics are called to live their faith when dealing with health and sickness.”

Dr. McGovern emphasized the guild physicians want to serve as resources for Bishop Rhoades and the priests of the diocese when they have medical questions as well as reach out to Catholic physicians and students-in-training for healthcare professions so “they will live as Catholics who happen to be physicians or nurses or pharmacists, etc. instead of physicians, etc. who happen to be Catholics,” he stressed.

Medical practitioners interested in becoming active members are asked to contact Dr. McGovern at (260) 437-8377.

“I hope to encourage and support my medical colleagues in living out our Catholic faith, which has unfortunately become even more difficult in recent months than ever before,” added Dr. Heimann.

“It is extremely exciting to belong to a group of such intelligent, dynamic and passionately Catholic people,” she continued.

“I believe that being a part of this unique community, our professional and spiritual lives will become more fervent in serving Christ and each other,” concluded Dr. Heimann.

Some of the first concrete initiatives of the guild include:

- Monthly board meetings with a two-fold focus — (1) formation as Catholics through study of the life of Dr. Jerome Lejeune and (2) beginning in July with the study of the new Charter for Healthcare Workers, due from the Vatican on June 16
- Annual Lenten evening of reflection scheduled for March 1 from 7-8:30 p.m. at St. John the Baptist Catholic Church, Fort Wayne
- Annual White Mass for all who work in the medical profession caring for patients scheduled for Oct. 2 at St. Mary Catholic Church, Fort Wayne, with Bishop Rhoades as celebrant
- Outreach to local medical students and family practice residents, physician assistant students and nurse practitioner students to include a Theology on Tap program for healthcare workers-in-training
- Establish a local guild website — a place where physicians and others can learn anonymously about what the Church teaches and why, and contact information for questions about practicing the Catholic faith while working in the medical field
- Radio outreach, using Redeemer Radio to establish recurring one to two minute segments with local physicians commenting on medical items of interest, and, establishing a half-hour weekly show that would include interviewing local, regional and national experts on numerous areas of interest
- Periodic days of reflection and education for physicians
- An online message board where Catholic physicians can ask for advice from peers regarding certain patient or work situations.

Dr. McGovern is committed to the promise of the guild and said, “I believe it is God’s call to me at this point in my life to contribute my available time to the formation of this new guild. At a time when the government is taking over more healthcare and greater wedges are being driven between patients and their physicians, I sensed the need to do something to turn back the tide.”

He added, “The CMA gives me a venue where I can do that with other Catholic physicians. The CMA says that since Obamacare has been passed, the number of new guilds has skyrocketed.... The essential interaction in medicine is not between patients and the government or patients and their insurance company — it’s between a patient and his physician or between a patient and the nurse taking care of him. We want to return to that. We want to stop the secular media from being the place where healthcare workers and patients are told how they are supposed to view medical care.”

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