

## **The Catholic Doctor is In: Physicians on the Barricades of the Culture War**

“Death battles against Life: a ‘culture of death’ seeks to impose itself on our desire to live, and live to the full. There are those who reject the light of life, preferring “the fruitless works of darkness” - John Paul II, Aug 15, 1993

With my firstborn son slung on my back while standing next to my wife in the hot Colorado sun of Denver’s World Youth Day, I heard the pope use the phrase ‘Culture of Death’ publicly for the first time. Even though I was sleep-deprived, I sensed that this phrase would define the enemy against which the Church and men of good will would fight throughout my life.

Later that day, the Pope explained that “The ‘Culture of Life’ means respect for nature and protection of God’s work of creation. In a special way it means respect for human life from the first moment of conception until its natural end.”

Two years later in The Gospel of Life, he wrote that we are living in the midst of “an enormous and dramatic clash between good and evil, death and life, the culture of death and the culture of life...we are all involved and we all share in it, with the inescapable responsibility of choosing to be unconditionally pro-life”.

Not without reason, we physicians are often pilloried for being late. In this culture war, though, we Catholic physicians neither want to be late nor missing in action. That is why we recently formed the Northeast Indiana Guild of the Catholic Medical Association under the patronage of Doctor and Servant of God Jerome Lejeune, a stalwart warrior for the Culture of Life. We guild physicians choose to be unconditionally pro-life, and we call all physicians and health care workers to join us on the side of Life.

To paraphrase GK Chesterton, we guild physicians hate the world (as influenced by the Culture of Death) enough to change it, and love the world enough to think it worth changing.

Our national government wants to remake the practice of medicine in its own image and likeness - as personal, affordable, and efficient as that is. But it cannot succeed in dehumanizing and commoditizing medicine if we do not let it. The nitty-gritty of medicine takes place in exam rooms during interactions between physicians, patients, and family members; in hospital rooms where nurses, therapists, and technicians help to save and prolong lives; and in operating rooms where surgeons, nurses, and anesthesiologists repair weak and broken bodies.

Physicians are not the only health care workers, but if we are not unconditionally pro-life, then it is less likely that those who assist us in our labors will be unconditionally pro-life either. One of the purposes of the Catholic Medical Association is “To assist the Church in the work of communicating Catholic medical ethics to the medical profession and society at large”.

This new column, The <sup>^</sup>Catholic<sup>^</sup> Doctor is In, will appear regularly in Today’s Catholic as a means to educate both health care workers and patients about how to live an authentically Catholic faith in and through their medical care, whether in the living room, bedroom, exam room, hospital room, or operating room.

According to Pope John Paul II, the “heart of the tragedy” culminating in the Culture of Death is the “eclipse of the sense of God and of man”; man has forgotten God. I pray that through the efforts of future columns written by my colleagues, you will learn that physicians have not forgotten God and that there are physicians who are dedicated to helping our co-workers and patients serve the Culture of Life in all their medical decisions and treatments.

- Dr. McGovern is a Mohs surgeon and president of the Doctor Jerome Lejeune Catholic Medical Guild of Northeast Indiana. More information is available on the guild website [www.fortwaynecma.com](http://www.fortwaynecma.com).

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