

# à propos

Canadian Catholic Bioethics Institute  
Institut canadien catholique de bioéthique

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## Message from Dr. Moira McQueen, Executive Director

### CCBI

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### OUR MISSION

To promote and protect the dignity of the human person through interdisciplinary ethics research and education in health care and the life sciences.

Dear Friends,

My family is preparing to celebrate the Baptism of our second grandchild, and we are all looking forward to the occasion.



We probably all have different thoughts about the importance of this, but for those of us who believe in the Incarnation, Death and Resurrection of Christ, Baptism is not just “a celebration”, but a transformation. The little one will be welcomed into the Church as “Priest, Prophet and King”. It's amazing, when you stop to reflect on the deep significance of Baptism. We recognize that God loves us so unconditionally that we are elevated to share Christ's gifts with him, as the original and perfect Priest, Prophet and King.

As we approach Christmas, we can appreciate the ever-available possibility of a new beginning for each of us, represented by the Christ child. We look at Him, an innocent newborn, adored by shepherds, angels and kings, gathered round his crèche. Any time we see, or hold, a newborn, something of that same amazement washes over us, and we feel protective, tender and compassionate, all at once. New babies feel so good! They are easy to love, and we feel a great surge of love for them – just as they are. They do not have to be “somebody”, they simply have to “be” – a miracle of existence.

If most of us feel this way (and I think it's a constitutive part of human

nature to feel that way, at least towards one's own offspring, although there are, of course, exceptions) then why do we not recognize the miracle of life in its earlier stages? Two days, two months, two years – there is a quantitative difference, but not a qualitative one. It seems to be really difficult for people to see that they themselves were once at that stage, that even the Christ child, fully human as He was, also had to be an embryo, then a fetus, until delivery, just like us.

Do people who love to look at the baby in the manger ever think about that? Do they ever think that if his life had been interrupted at the embryonic or fetal stage, the world would have been minus not just one of God's creation, but the Son of God Himself? Surely no-one would dream of interrupting that life? Why then, if God so loves us, would we ever think it right to interrupt some one else's life at that stage? Can't we see that we are depriving the world of countless “Priests, Prophets and Kings”?

Every Christmas, every Baptism, draws us into a reflection on the gift of life. At the CCBI, we strive to promote that gift, to work towards persuading others to recognize the gift of life as the gift of God to every one of us, at all stages. We take this opportunity to thank you, our supporters, for everything you do to promote Catholic values in a world that sometimes does not appear to care.

This Christmas, perhaps we could remember our baptismal gifts of being named “Priest, Prophet and King”, and begin to exercise them! Those gifts could change the earth – they are meant to! And what a magnificent gift we would be giving to the newborn King, along with the gold, frankincense and myrrh.

## News Highlights

### British Columbia

Executive Director Moira McQueen was honoured to be invited to the greater Vancouver area to speak to a number of groups on the bioethics of end-of-life care.

### The Catholic Doctors' Association and the Respect Life Office of the Archdiocese of Vancouver

organized the November 12 lecture on "Catholic Moral Teaching and Concerns about Artificial Nutrition and Hydration" which covered end-of-life issues as well as the use of ANH in other situations.

The **Archdiocese of Vancouver** invited Dr McQueen to address clergy on November 13 as part of Priests' Study Week. Over 140 priests and two archbishops attended and frequently engaged in lively discussion. Dr. McQueen spoke on the following:

- "Relational Issues and End of Life Health Care" looked at truth telling, cultural issues, confidentiality, and family conflicts;
- "Bioethical Issues at End of Life" examined withdrawal of treatment, ANH, terminal sedation, and palliative care;
- "Moral, Practical and Spiritual Preparations for End of Life" considered Advance Directives, Powers of Attorney for Health Care, moral decision-making, spirituality and suffering.

### New Brunswick Lectures

Dr McQueen was also invited to speak on November 22 at St. Thomas University, Fredericton, NB, and in Saint John the following day on "Going to the House of the Father: Care of Body and Soul at the End of Life". She told the audiences that end of life can be a *kairos* time, when spiritual and pastoral issues, such as the meaning of suffering, become ever more important.

At this same time it is often necessary to deal with moral decisions such as withdrawal of treatment, the provision of palliative care, and more.

The topics were developed in light of Pope John Paul II's thoughts on Christian humanism. The lecture at St. Thomas University was the inaugural lecture of a new series, called the John XXIII Lecture Series.

## End-of-Life Care in a Multicultural Society Public Lunchtime Seminar, November 1



Fr Joseph A. Chandrakanthan, PhD, ThD, Clinical Ethicist at the Centre for Clinical Ethics (Toronto), gave CCBI's second lunchtime seminar of 2007 on "End-of-life Care in a Multicultural Society: Ethical Issues in Shared Autonomy and Truth-telling".

Father Joseph introduced his talk with an explanation of clinical ethics in the context of caregiving and the special characteristics of Catholic bioethics. Aspects of multiculturalism include the facts that about 120 different languages are spoken in Canada and that all major world religions have a place of worship in many Canadian cities.

Both care-givers and care recipients in Canada are from a multitude of cultures, languages and religions. Cultural sensitivity is needed at key moments in end-of-life care.

### Catholic Jewish Perspectives in Bioethics

CCBI is delighted to have become a member of a new Catholic-Jewish group, whose purpose is to discuss Catholic-Jewish perspectives in bioethics with the possibility of developing a theme for further discussion in a public forum. This is being facilitated under the joint lead of Father Damian MacPherson, Director of Ecumenism and Interfaith Affairs for the Archdiocese of Toronto, and Rabbi Aaron Flanzraich, Chair of the Toronto Rabbinical Council.

### Bioethics and Mental Health Conference



Chaplain Christopher De Bono and Debbie Collins, volunteer peer spiritual care group co-facilitator, from the Mental Health Centre, Penetanguishine made a joint presentation on *De Profundis: Spirituality in a Mental Health Centre*.

## Broken of Mind, but Not Shattered of Spirit Annual Lecture

On October 4, 2007, the CCBI held its Annual Lecture, which was given this year by Professor Michael Higgins, President of St. Thomas University, New Brunswick, and well known media presence in Canada and beyond.



Archbishop Grecco with Dr Michael Higgins

Dr. Higgins' lecture took a brilliant literary perspective on our theme of mental health, enriched by his witty sense of humour. Entitled *Broken of Mind, but Not Shattered of Spirit*, the lecture used excerpts from books and poetry, focusing in one poem, for example, on the anguish caused to a husband-poet by his wife's suicide. A later poem reveals how the process of time, reflection and insight continued to shape the husband's mental and emotional state, to the point where *he* was no longer "shattered of spirit". He has been "healed", to a large extent because of his personal, poetic way of working things through. Professor Higgins held the large crowd captive by this transcendent approach to some all too human moral crises.

Bishop Richard Grecco honoured us that same evening by his presence, making a delightful presentation to Dr. Bill Sullivan in recognition of Bill's appointment to the Pontifical Academy for Life.



The Annual Lecture will be available on the Mental Health page of CCBI's website, [www.ccbi-utoronto.ca](http://www.ccbi-utoronto.ca).

## Bioethical Dimensions — Wellness in Mind, Body, and Spirit

Professor Higgins' impact was strongly felt by participants from many fields during the CCBI's conference the following day, on Friday October 5, 2007, when further keynote addresses on mental health issues were given by Professor emeritus Barry Brown, Chaplain Chris De Bono together with Debbie Collins, Dr. Bill Sullivan, and Dr. Ed Rzdadki.(below).



Their important talks helped conference participants gain perspective on a broader focus on mental wellbeing, which attempts to encourage spirituality as a necessary component of healing for many people in their struggles with mental distress and illness.

## National Conference for Catholic Doctors April 25 - 27, 2008

### The Vocation of the Catholic Physician: Integrating the Practical, the Bioethical and the Spiritual

Archbishop Thomas Collins and the Archdiocese of Toronto are hosting this national conference to contribute to the ongoing bioethical and spiritual formation of Catholic physicians and health care providers. The conference is being organized by the CCBI and will be held at the University of St. Michael's College in Toronto. *Simultaneous translation into French will be available.*

International speakers and workshop leaders will examine key bioethical issues that doctors encounter in their practice: *(Detailed information will be posted on [www.ccbi-utoronto.ca](http://www.ccbi-utoronto.ca).)*

Archbishop Thomas Collins — *Keynote Speaker*  
Myles Sheehan, SJ, MD, PhD (Chicago) — *End-of-Life Issues*  
Iain Benson — *Conscientious Objection*  
Tom Maddix (Vancouver) — *Spirituality and Health Care*  
Bishop Ronald Fabbro, CSB, Diocese of London —  
*Stem cell Research: New and Continuing Ethical Issues*  
Dr. Maria Kraw, President, St. Joseph Moscati Catholic Doctors' Guild — *Fertility Care*  
Hazel Markwell, PhD, ThD, Centre for Clinical Ethics —  
*Non-heartbeating Organ Donation*  
Dr. Joseph Ayoub (Montreal) — *End-of-Life Issues*  
Sr Hanna Klaus, MD — *Teen Sex: Is Advice on Abstinence Working?*

**Cost:** \$300 or \$250 when paid by January 31, 2008.

## For People in the Pews

Barry Brown, Bridget Campion, Moira McQueen and Mary Rowell have all been involved in presenting For People in the Pews in Peterborough, Bracebridge, Cobourg, Courtice, Aurora and Toronto.

This open lectures series is an introduction to Catholic bioethics: its history, foundations, as well as its relevance in today's world in relation to the dignity of the person. Topics include beginning-of-life issues (cloning, *in vitro* fertilization, stem cell research) and end-of-life issues (advance care planning, artificial nutrition and hydration, terminal sedation, physician assisted suicide / death, and euthanasia).

### FPIP Schedule 2008

#### Toronto

Ryerson University (Student Chaplaincy hosting)  
January 15, 22, 29 and February 5.

St. Stephen's Chapel  
Thursday, April 3, 10, 17, and 24.

Our Lady of Lourdes: April 8, 15, 22, and 20.

#### Kitchener

St. Aloysius, February 11, 18, 25, and March 3 at 7 pm.

#### Waterloo

St. Agnes, February 11, 18, 25, and March 3 at 1 pm.

Information is available at [www.ccbi-utoronto](http://www.ccbi-utoronto), or call Rose Maggisano at 416 926 2340.

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## Thank You for Your Support

The Board of Directors of the Canadian Catholic Bioethics Institute gratefully acknowledges the generous support of the many individuals and associations whose gifts enable the Institute to undertake worthy initiatives and address the bioethics issues and concerns of Canada's Catholic community.

## Conferences

### Hospice Palliative Care: At a Crossroads

In November Rose Maggisano, CCBI Administrative Assistant/Researcher, participated in the Canadian Hospice and Palliative Care Conference, **Hospice Palliative Care: At a Crossroads** that was held in Toronto.

She attended a variety of workshops and lectures presented by physicians, social workers and nurses who work in the palliative care field, including talks on finding meaning at the end of life, advance care planning, maintaining hope when a cure cannot be found, and physicians-assisted dying.

### Palliative Care for the Homeless

On October 19 Bambi Rutledge represented the Institute at an interactive forum on homelessness and palliative care, **Dignity: Moving Beyond Despair**.

Speakers included Cathy Crowe, Street Nurse; Sharon Baxter, Executive Director of the Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association who provided an update on the status of palliative care in Canada; Dr Manal Guirguis-Younger, St. Paul University (Ottawa), who summarized current national research on hospice and homelessness; and Dr Melissa Melnitzer and medical student Pracha Vatsya spoke about the needs and gaps of the status of homelessness and palliative care in Toronto.

Ms Vatsya noted that among the leading causes of homelessness is abuse at a young age. Laura Fairley of Perram House Hospice, the only residential hospice in Toronto, presented on Toronto's hospice for homeless people.

Wendy Muckle, Executive Director of the Ottawa Inner City Health Project and founder of the Mission Hospice in Ottawa, spoke on the provision of palliative care to homeless people in Ottawa. She described how experience has now shown that people who living in the hospice may be palliative, but not necessarily terminal. Because they have improved living conditions, nutrition, and medical attention, their health improved considerably. Beds were set up to accommodate more men than women, but to their surprise the number of women in the hospice has increased.