

Canadian Council of Churches – Ethics and Genetics

As the CCCB representative on the Biotechnology Reference Group of the Canadian Council of Churches, I am happy to report that this interdenominational group has started its pilot programme in Ethics and Genetics in seven different denominational churches. I would like to thank Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Toronto, for allowing the pilot to be organized in their parish, and for all the help they have given in organizing this new project. As the facilitator at Lourdes, I am looking forward to participating in the programme, and in receiving input and evaluation from the group. That will help the BRG to decide whether the programme is truly of value to parishioners, and will meet some of their needs.

“For People in the Pews” - CCBI’s Parish-based Programme in Bioethics

CCBI completed three FPIP sessions last fall, and we are scheduled to present the programme in St. Margaret of Scotland Parish, Toronto, (February), Our Lady of Grace, Aurora (March), Holy Rosary Parish, Belleville (March), St. John Bosco, Brockville (May).

Please contact us if you would like to have this programme brought to your parish. At our last Board meeting, Archbishop Smith of Edmonton suggested we try presenting it through video-conferencing, and we are looking into doing that.

Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops

I was privileged to make a short presentation at the CCCB Plenary in November, and was struck once again by the vast number of areas for which the bishops are accountable. Noting that Pope Benedict XVI is promoting evangelization as one of the most essential tasks of the Church, it is important for all of us, as well as the bishops, to play our part. Many times that means having the courage to stand up for what we believe to be right, yet in a way that persuades rather than alienates our neighbour. We could also help our bishops and priests as they try to become even more deeply involved in evangelization than before by contacting them by letter or email to encourage them in their work and by letting them know that their efforts are appreciated.

Moira McQueen



CANADIAN CATHOLIC BIOETHICS INSTITUTE
INSTITUT CANADIEN CATHOLIQUE DE BIOÉTHIQUE
UNIVERSITY OF ST MICHAEL'S COLLEGE
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

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Winter/Spring
2011



CANADIAN CATHOLIC BIOETHICS INSTITUTE
INSTITUT CANADIEN CATHOLIQUE DE BIOÉTHIQUE

UNIVERSITY OF ST MICHAEL'S COLLEGE
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Executive Director's Message

Although we will be well into February before many of you receive this, we would still like to wish all of our supporters a happy and blessed 2011. We are looking forward to many interesting events in this, CCBI's 10th anniversary year.

Cardinal Ambrozic Lecture, March 24

Our first major event will be the Cardinal Ambrozic Lecture, to be given this year by Bishop William McGrattan, Auxiliary Bishop in the Archdiocese of Toronto. Bishop McGrattan will discuss the relationship between health care and Catholic spirituality. This is sure to be an insightful and thought-provoking discussion, especially in our social and political climate where so much is being done to discredit religious views in any field simply because they are religious. All are invited to this important event which takes place in Fr. Madden Auditorium in Carr Hall, 100 St Joseph Street, on Thursday, March 24, at 7 pm.

CCBI Board of Directors

We are delighted to welcome Mr. John Gennaro to our Board of Directors, and we look forward to collaborating with him in many ways. We also wish to thank Mr. Peter Quail, President of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta in Canada for his years of

service on the Board, and for all that he and the Order do to promote not only CCBI, but also Catholic values in bioethics in daily life.

We are grateful that Mr. John Kyle will remain on the Board, and would like to thank Mr. Patrick Jordan, our Treasurer, for his counsel as our financial advisor and promoter.

We are indebted to our full Board for their unfailing support of CCBI's work, and we are similarly indebted to Mr. Frank Morneau for again generously employing his powerful fundraising skills to enlist several patrons who have agreed to donate substantial amounts over the next three years to ensure the continuation of CCBI's existence. Please know that we are grateful, and will do our best to live up to your trust in us.

CCBI's Annual Lecture, November 2010

It was a pleasure to have Dr. Bill Sullivan return to CCBI to deliver our annual lecture, and we thank him for his interesting and persuasive talk, which prompted many reflections and comments from the audience. Thank you, Bill! (For an excellent summary of Dr. Sullivan's lecture, please see Dr. Bridget Campion's comments below.)

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CCBI's 10th Anniversary
University of St. Michael's
College
November 16, 2 pm

Cardinal Ambrozic Lecture
Father Madden Auditorium
Carr Hall, 100 St Joseph St.
March 24, 7 pm

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Parish Program: "For People in the Pews"

Stem cell research. A Parliamentary Bill to legalize euthanasia. Cloning. For Catholics, newspaper headlines and broadcasts contain a myriad of issues that raise ethical questions: is in vitro fertilization an acceptable way to have children? Is "pulling the plug" the same thing as mercy killing? And where is conscience in all of this?

The Canadian Catholic Bioethics Institute's "For People in the Pews" (FPIP) is a series designed to help Catholics understand emerging issues in bioethics and the Church's response to them. In each of four evenings, a member of CCBI's staff or Advisory Committee will lead parish groups through issues, cases and Church Teaching, leaving plenty of time for questions and discussion. The sessions are meant to be informative and relevant, addressing topics like end-of-life care, assisted human reproduction, living wills. At Holy Family Parish in Whitby, for instance, discussions included when human life begins, the use of pain relief at the end of life, and the pros and cons of advance directives. Parishioners continued the lively conversation over coffee and cookies during each session's break.

CCBI has presented the series in parishes in the Archdioceses of Edmonton and Toronto, the Dioceses of Hamilton, Peterborough, and Calgary.

For more information or to book the series for your parish, contact the CCBI, (416) 926 2335 www.ccbi-utoronto.ca



2010 Annual Lecture

Speaker: William Sullivan
"Ethical and Loving Care of Persons Living with Progressive Cognitive Impairments and Their Families"

On November 24, 2010, Dr. Bill Sullivan delivered the Canadian Catholic Bioethics Institute's Annual Lecture, "Ethical and Loving Care of Persons Living with Dementia and their Families." The Founding Director of the CCBI, and currently the Executive Director of the International Association of Catholic Bioethicists as well as a Member of the Pontifical Academy for Life, Dr. Sullivan is also a family physician at St. Michael's Hospital and Surrey Place Centre. He brought his expertise as both a bioethicist and family physician to his lecture.

Dr. Sullivan introduced the audience to the work of the International Association of Catholic Bioethicists, whose most recent meeting focused on the care of persons living with progressive cognitive impairments. He explained the differences between various forms of dementia and used case studies to illustrate the challenges faced by patients and families as they moved through the stages of progressive dementia. Concerns included the importance of truth telling, particularly when the patient is in the earlier stages of dementia, and balancing the need to maintain the patient's autonomy whenever possible against the need to preserve the safety of the patient and family.

With the numbers of persons suffering from progressive cognitive impairment set to increase as the baby boomers age, the need for ethical, loving care becomes more urgent. This care, according to Dr. Sullivan, must address the needs of the whole person who is not diminished in dignity despite the ravages of the condition. He emphasized the importance of spiritual care as patients and their families grapple with questions of meaning, suffering, and the presence of a loving God in the challenges they face. At the same time, this attention to spirituality can remind families, caregivers, and the larger community of the unequivocal value and dignity of the members of this vulnerable patient population. In fact, Dr. Sullivan spoke about the importance of not simply "warehousing" patients with progressive cognitive impairments; instead, it is essential that facilities and programs are developed to help patients live as fully as possible in their impairment. He noted, for instance, the importance of music, colour, and company as essential parts of the care of this patient population.

In Jesus, Catholic health care practitioners find a model of healing. Not only did Jesus attend to the sick and the dying, he also moved among lepers, demoniacs, and other marginalized members of society. By focusing on patients with progressive cognitive impairment and their families, Dr. Sullivan imitated this healing ministry of Jesus, particularly in his insistence on the transformative power of love as an essential component of truly ethical care.

Bridget Campion, PhD, is a bioethicist, researcher, educator, and staff member of the Canadian Catholic Bioethics Institute.

View this lecture Online at www.ccbi-utoronto.ca

Reflection for World Day of the Sick, February 11, 2011

Being Sick

There are obviously many ways of being sick. There are the sicknesses that everyone experiences, like having a cold, getting the 'flu, having a headache, a toothache, and so on. Then there are "sicknesses unto death", like terminal cancer. There are also long-term conditions, like multiple sclerosis. There are conditions which affect the mind or emotions, like schizophrenia.

In every sickness, a loving God is present, oftentimes an incomprehensible God, calling the person into a deeper relationship with Himself through the sickness itself. That sounds, somehow, like the pious gibbering of someone who is not sick at the moment, or not very sick. It would have more weight if the person making the statement were in constant pain, physical or emotional. Even then, it would not be a "persuasive" statement, since everyone is in a particular relationship with God, a unique relationship, which is known more or less explicitly or lived at a level below conscious awareness.

It is quite impossible to speak to all the different religious stances of people, of those within different religions, of persons who give credence to no "organized religion", of explicit atheists. For this reason alone, the following remarks are directed at persons who are more-or-less practising Catholics, meaning that they have at least minimal adherence to the great truths of the Catholic religion, and relate to God through this belief.

Many such Catholics are going to face up to serious illness at one time or another, or are going to face the progressive limitations of old age, physical and/or mental. If a person's relationship with God has been lived in a kind of "going through the motions" blur, such a one will be ill prepared to face the rigours imposed by sickness and limitation. The statement above about God's calling each of us at every moment deeper into His love will fall, at least initially, on ears somewhat deaf to understanding, to humility, surrender and love.

Of course, since sickness falls within the great mystery of evil, no one is going to understand it fully. But the one who is in love with God, who has a personal relationship with God, can trust Him beyond understanding. We are not speaking here about stoicism in the face of suffering, much as that may be admirable. We are speaking about life lived under the influence of actual grace, that help given by God to turn seeming tragedy into victorious love. We are a sacramental people, hence the importance of the Sacrament of the Sick as early as possible in the illness. The effects of the sacrament are multiple, but above all is the gift to live one's sickness in total trust.

The "success" of each one's pilgrimage of life is utterly dependent on one's relationship with God, with the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit. As indicated above, this relationship may explicit or implicit. Without this relationship, a life truly is tragic. There is no suggestion here of some kind of individualism when we speak about our relationship with God. Our relationships with family, friends and strangers all play an integral part in our life's journey. But all human relationships receive their power to enliven only through one's primary relationship with God.

We should, as people of faith, be entering more deeply into our relationship with God every day. Sickness will never be easy to deal with, but it can be absorbed into a person's life who is in love with God. For a person whose relationship with God is rather superficial, sickness cannot be so absorbed. What will be necessary for such a person is conversion from the attractions in life which barred the way to relationship with God to the beginnings of acknowledgment of God and trust in His love.

Father Leo Walsh, CSB, Professor Emeritus Moral Theology, USMC Faculty of Theology, is Pastor at St. Paul's Church, LaSalle, Ontario and a member of the staff of the Canadian Catholic Bioethics Institute.