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Message from Most Reverend John J. Krol, Archbishop of Philadelphia

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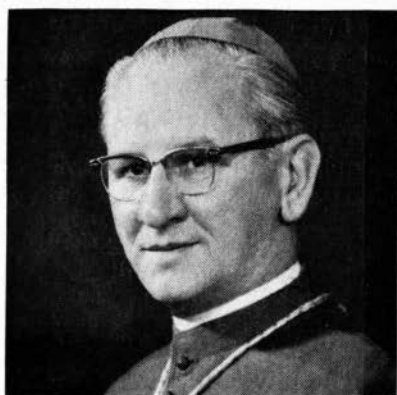
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ARCHBISHOP'S HOUSE PHILADELPHIA



ARCHBISHOP KROL
photo courtesy Bradford Bachrach

It is most gratifying to learn that the February edition of THE LINACRE QUARTERLY has been designated as the Philadelphia issue and that it will contain articles by physicians from the Philadelphia area.

Philadelphia is known as the Cradle of Independence and as the first Capital of our Country; but it is also the site of the first hospital, the first School of Anatomy, the first Medical School, the first Academy of Natural Sciences, and the first Medical College for Women in our Country.

Medicine as a science and as an art has enjoyed a privileged position in the history of mankind. It is important to the individual and to society. The sacred character of human life and the qualities demanded of those who engage in its practice have been the subject of legislative concern. Two thousand years before Christ the code of Hammurabi attached compensations and penalties to success and failure in medical practice. Hippocrates gave noble expression to the professional conscience which demands respect for life, devotion to the sick and consideration of such personal factors as self-discipline and control, dignity and prudent judgment.

In medicine, as in other branches of knowledge, well established principles often fade into obscurity. Except for the priestly ministry, no other class of persons reaches into the critical moments of life as deeply and as intimately as do physicians.

To prevent the pessimism which may derive from the conviction that the best efforts of medicine must eventually yield to inevitable death, the physician must confront the problem of sickness and take a stand on human destiny. He must recognize the value of human worth and dignity and he must find that dignity not in the accidental trappings which highlight social, economic and intellectual differences, but in the human being composed of body and soul, made to the image and likeness of God.

Unless the physician looks beyond the biochemical phenomena, he must admit that his best efforts are destined to failure — that he can at best relieve pain and defer, but he cannot prevent, death.

A physician cannot ignore the message of Jesus Christ, Who identified Himself as the Master of Life and Death and proved this by numerous miracles, especially the Resurrection.

The *Book of Ecclesiasticus* tells us "God created medicines out of the earth and wise men will not abhor them." (38-4) It also advises us not to neglect ourselves in sickness, but to take advice and directions from physicians. (9-12)

The physician, however, must prove his responsibility to the individual community by constantly seeking to increase his fund of knowledge. He must constantly seek to increase his sense of charity — a charity which will not be a superficial, irresolute sentiment and does not curry favor — a charity which is as blind to the alluring trappings of wealth as it is to the unpleasant wretchedness of poverty and destitution. He should try to increase his appreciation of the value of human worth and dignity, as well as the spiritual destiny.

Medical science has made the greatest progress in periods of urgency, which threaten the existence of communities, through the heroic devotion of doctors. The dedication of doctors to science, art and medicine and to the sick is a constant source of inspiration and edification.

†JOHN J. KROL

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