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## From the Editor's Desk

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## From the Editor's Desk



Andre Hellegers, M.D.

Andre Hellegers, M.D., director of the Kennedy Institute of Ethics died suddenly in Europe this spring. His unexpected death has shocked us all and has literally left a void in the bioethical scene. If there was any man who had a grasp of the bioethical scene, it was Andre. Rarely does one individual emerge in these confusing times who seemed to have a comprehension of the medical-moral scene, a philosophic understanding of its ramifications, and a knowledge of the practical and socio-economic impact of many of the movements of our day as he did. Andre was truly a renaissance man. Recently, in Milwaukee, he gave a talk on the developments in *in vitro* fertilization and health care. His facility of expression and his wide-ranging comments on these issues were a demonstration of comprehension of them and his articulation of them was truly brilliant.

In his many diverse roles, he helped deepen the interest and understanding of the complex problems of medicine and bioethics. As director and founder of the Kennedy Institute of Ethics at Georgetown University, he stimulated the study of medical ethics and the influence of this Institute is appreciated by us all today. Many scholars, philosophers, theologians, and physicians have been stimulated to pursue this field through the training they received at the Institute.

On a more personal note, my contacts with Dr. Hellegers were always stimulating and enlarged my perceptions of things present and things to come. He had a way of opening vistas which one had never thought of before. I shall always remember being with him in the Tombs 1789, a nearby Georgetown restaurant when my son and I were looking over Georgetown University. His attention and interest

in my son warmed the "cockles of my heart." He was not interested in pushing the University. Rather, as a true friend, he was interested in what was best for the individual student.

The characteristics of Dr. Hellegers which impressed me most were his love for the Church, his loyalty to his friends; his tremendous energy in following his interests and quest for truth. The latter attribute was continually demonstrated over the years I knew him. He loved the dialectic of conflicting viewpoints and had an unshakable faith in dialogue and disciplined argumentation, and placed a premium on intelligence. Intellectual dishonesty and mediocrity were scorned. He literally meant it when he last wrote to me that "I firmly believe that Christ meant it when He said He would be with His Church till the end of time and the gates of Hell would not prevail against it."

During controversies in the bioethical arena, he preferred "to maintain a stance of confidence in God's protection." In an article in *The National Catholic Reporter* (May 18, 1979), by his good friend and colleague, Richard A. McCormick, S.J., the Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (n. 43) is quoted. "Vatican II insisted that it is generally the function of their (lay persons') well formed Christian conscience to see that the divine law is inscribed in the life of the earthly city. . . . Let the layman take on his own distinctive role."

Andre E. Hellegers was that man and did it in a unique way. As I mentioned, his untimely death has left a void in the bioethical scene as well as in the hearts of his friends, but his example and life should spur each of us on to greater heights as Christ watches over His Church and our efforts.

— John P. Mullooly, M.D.  
Editor