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## A Catholic Physician - A Person of Faith

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## A Catholic Physician – A Person of Faith

Perhaps the most difficult human experience a physician faces is to tell his patient that science can no longer help him towards recovery, and that death is imminent. Even with the greatest of tact, the man of medicine endures heartfelt pain as he reveals this saddening news to the person who is sick, especially if it happens to be a loved one.

At times, in really not knowing what to say, the physician is apt to remark, "Yes, I know what it's like." That is, "I know what you are going through." While that may be partially true, the fact is that the doctor really doesn't know what it's like — the anguish, worry or suffering the patient is going through at this particular moment in time.

The Old Testament reports that Moses conversed with Almighty God on different occasions as he led the chosen people to the promised land. Throughout the forty years in the desert the Israelites constantly complained even though God performed miracles before their very eyes, feeding them with Manna and quail, satisfying their thirst with fresh drinking water, curing their ills, guiding them by day with a column of smoke and at night with a column of fire. Moses called them "stiff-necked" because they violated God's command for true worship and felt that the people entrusted to him were not only ungrateful but impossible. In reading this biblical account in detail, it would not seem difficult to imagine Moses saying, "God, there You are in Your comfortable heaven away from it all — really, You don't know what it's like."

On the first Christmas day, in the town of Bethlehem, God settled the question, if there ever was one, once and for all. In essence He said, "Yes, I do know what it's like — to be human. To love, do favors for people, be rejected, be spit upon, be nailed to a cross and die. But I also want you to know something else — there is a life beyond that moment of death and the world will see that suffering has purpose, it's allied with redemption."

What has meaning is the response to the question — Who is Christ? The general catechetical or theological answer is one that is heard often; namely He is the Incarnate Word, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, the Son of God, the Messiah. Yet the question must be personalized as it was to Peter. "Who do *you* say that I am?" If we truly believe, and are able to transmit this truth to the patient then the transition from earthly death to heavenly life becomes an acceptable reality for the person of faith. Yes, God knows what it's like. He comforts and consoles, but above all He understands.

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