



The Healing Word

Curatio ex corde Christi:
Healing from the heart of Christ.

Rx for today's Catholic Health Care Professionals

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From the President

Christina Matthews, R.N, B.A., B.S., M.A.

Dear Members and Friends of Curatio:

Curatio is a lay apostolate of Catholic Health Care workers. Our members are committed to bringing Christ to their patients and colleagues. Curatio, as an organization, supports its membership through educational opportunities, prayer, liturgical worship and fellowship. As we grow in personal holiness, we are better able to bring the “healing heart of Christ” to the sick and to be a witness of Christ to our colleagues.

In an effort to serve you better, we have inaugurated this quarterly communique, *The Healing Word*.

As we look forward, here’s what you can expect:

- **Monthly sharing groups** coming soon.
Plans are underway to begin a monthly sharing group at a local parish for Mass, a time of directed reflection before the Blessed Sacrament, pot-luck breakfast, study and discussion on the Charter for health care workers, and prayer.
- **Christmas Caroling TBD**
- **February 13th 2010 *Celebration of the World day of the Sick***
10:00 A.M. Cathedral of St. Paul
- **March 5-7, 2010** Our first *Curatio Weekend Retreat*
Villa Maria Retreat, Frontenac, Minnesota
The retreat is for Health care workers who seek a place of quiet, daily prayer and the presence of God. Father Aquinas Guilbeau, the host of Word to Life on Sirius radio,

will be retreat master. The focus of the retreat will be to help health care workers be formed in the Image and Likeness of Christ, thus enabling them to grow in holiness and able to see Christ in their patients and co-workers.

- **April 27, 2010** *Feast of St. Gianna*
Time TBD; Mary Mother of God

By God's grace, the members of Curatio will continue to be empowered by the Holy Spirit to fulfill our vocation as Catholic Health Care workers.

From the Mission Director
Dianne Johnson, R.N., M.A.

The Spirituality of Curatio

The mission of Curatio's Apostolate is to promote, support and sustain the "Gospel of life." Members of Curatio, the Apostolate for Catholic Health Care workers, sanctify health care by taking their Baptismal call to holiness and the sacramental life of the Church seriously. With great joy members make every effort to fully live this call to holiness in their vocation to care for the sick. In *Lumen Gentium* (section 42) we read, "All the faithful are invited to strive for holiness and perfection of their own proper state. Indeed they have an obligation to so strive." Our proper state, then, as Health Care Professionals (and as our mission statement reads), is to strive "to act as leaven within the health care professions as we live in obedience to the Gospel message." We sincerely believe we receive all the graces necessary to be faithful to this mission through Christ and His Mystical Body, the Catholic Church.

The "Charter for Health Care Workers" will be a model and a guide for our apostolate. The first paragraph reads; "The work of health care persons is a very valuable *service to life*. It expresses a profoundly human and Christian commitment, undertaken and carried out not only as a technical activity but also one of dedication and love of neighbor." True love, then, is to love and serve as Christ loves and serves. For us, as health care workers, it is to see Christ in our patients and co-workers.

The daily life of a Curatio member is nourished and framed in prayer. We say we "work in the midst of prayer." As Christ promised "to never leave us orphans" and as the source and summit of Christ's love is derived from the Holy Eucharist, to attend daily Mass is the summit of prayer. So, we will try to attend daily Mass (if it is possible according to our state in life) and to join our personal needs, the needs of the patients we care for, and the needs of our family, friends and co-workers, with the sacrifice of Christ crucified, the Perfect offering of Christ to the Father. If attendance at Mass is not possible we will privately say a short prayer from our heart before beginning our shift asking God to unite us spiritually to Christ, to bless our prayers for our patients, to unite our daily actions with His and

for the grace to witness to others Christ's "unceasing prayer" in our actions. **In sum, we ask continually for the grace of healing that comes only from His Heart, "Curatio ex Corde Christi."** Thus the purpose of a Curatio member's daily prayer is to strive with a common effort for holiness fostering a more perfect living of the Gospel of Life within the vocation of health care. The fruit of this prayer will be the basis for the apostolate; only with "unceasing prayer" will Curatio members be formed to Christ and become instruments of His healing love, thus able to meet the demands of today's health care.

As our Baptism makes us members of the Body of Christ and "members one of another," Confirmation strengthens our life in Christ, and the Eucharist nourishes us on our journey. (CCC 1267) We will try to spend time with our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament of His Real Presence (again depending on our state in life and as time allows) asking in prayer for the grace to grant us His charity so we will be truly present to others, that we will abide in Christ's love and be able to love as Christ Himself loves, especially the patients we care for. As Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta reminds us, at the end of our life Jesus will not ask us, "What great things did we do for Him?" Rather He will ask, "How much love did we put into caring for our brother and sister in need?"

Naturally we will have a devotion to Christ's mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, asking for her son's intercession as we meditate on the life of Christ, especially reflecting on those mysteries of the Rosary that help to deepen and humanize our love and work for the sick.

The Feast Day of Our Lady of Lourdes which is the World Day of the Sick (Feb.11), the Feast Day of St. Gianna (April 28th), and the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (the third Friday after Pentecost) will be special days of celebration, Mass and fellowship. On other occasions Curatio members will come together for Mass and friendship and annually a retreat will be offered. We also provide time for our professional and educational needs which restore us in mind, body and spirit, all of which contribute to our attempt to be excellent health care workers. Scriptural reading and meditating on the life of Christ, the Divine Physician, and reading the lives of saints known for their work with the sick, are encouraged. Numerous church documents guide those who care for the sick and suffering.

As members of Curatio and of the Church militant we strive to defend the culture of life. We imitate as best we can the saints in the Church Triumphant, looking to St. Luke the apostle, St. Catherine of Sienna, St. Camillus of Lellis, and numerous other saints. We will take as a special intercessor St. Gianna Beretta Molla, who as a doctor and mother of our own time gave bold witness to the culture of life as a "martyr of love for life" in Christ's love for her.

As our patients face sickness and suffering, and especially as they approach death, we humbly comprehend that by caring for them we stand on holy ground. As health care workers we accompany them on their journey, praying with them for courage and hope in Christ with St. Paul: “In my own flesh I fill up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ for the sake of His Body, the Church” (Col 1: 24).

Suggested reading:

Caryll Houselander, *The Passion of the Infant Christ*. New York: Sheed & Ward, 1949. Reprinted as *Wood of the Cradle, Wood of the Cross: The Little Way of the Infant Jesus*. Manchester NH: Sophia Institute Press, c1995.

**From the Chaplain
Fr. Rolf Tollefson**

Sermon on St. Gianna, patron saint of Curatio

What is Curatio? Well, Curatio is actually a very simple organization. If you look at our logo, you can see two hearts: a larger heart (that of Christ) and a smaller heart (that of the patient). Curatio is a local group that was founded to help Catholics in health care to love. That’s it; to receive God’s love and then to give it away to our patients. It’s that simple. Our mission is to obey Christ’s command to “love one another as I have loved you.” We commemorate St. Gianna Beretta Molla, the patron saint of Curatio, today. We chose her as our patron saint because her life so well exemplifies our mission to love. St. Gianna loved heroically by receiving, becoming, and giving away God’s love as a physician, wife, and mother.

It all began at home with mom and dad. Gianna grew up in a strong Catholic family of eight. Her parents stressed simplicity of life; they went to daily Mass, prayed the daily Rosary, and consecrated themselves to the Sacred Heart. Sometimes Gianna received “tough” love from mom and dad: necessary punishments and corrections were never neglected. As a result of this love, three doctors, two priests, and one nun came from this family of eight!

Later, Gianna became involved in Catholic Action as a young adult. Gianna planned conferences, retreats, visited the poor in their homes, and even bathed an old woman covered with fleas. She also knew that true love meant living a pure life; she always dressed modestly.

In 1949, after she finished medical school in Milan, her mission to love as a physician began. If someone was too poor to pay, she assisted him or her free of charge. She did not leave the clinic until she saw the last patient who needed help, and would come home late. And notably, as she loved Jesus in her patients, she received love back from Jesus. St. Gianna writes: “Just as the priest may touch Jesus, so too, we doctors touch Jesus in the bodies of our patients: the poor, the young, the old, children.”

St. Gianna also practiced the tough love she learned as a child with those opposed to life. She refused a request for an abortifacient when asked by a man. She urged a girl to go to confession who aborted her child; she asked parish priests to preach against abortion. She loved by telling the truth to those who needed to hear it.

In 1955, at age 33, she was called to love God by getting married. She wrote many holy letters to her husband, Pietro, penning these beautiful lines: "Do all we can, [Pietro,] to make our new family a little cenacle where Jesus reigns over all our affections, desires, and actions..." She became heroically holy by loving her husband, whose life was so intertwined with hers, as she wrote in these lines to him: "...every morning at Mass I offer my work and yours, my joys and sufferings and yours."

Finally, St. Gianna chose to love...heroically love...by loving her unborn child more than her own life. Her pregnancies were always difficult and she experienced the soul pain of two miscarriages. So the couple redoubled their prayers, continuing to desire more children.

In the fall of 1961 she was found to be with child, but also with a painful ovarian cyst. Instead of having her uterus removed and thus killing the unborn child as a result, she generously decided to bring her child to term. She told her husband: "If you have to make a decision between me and the child, do not hesitate: choose the child—I demand it!" Dr. Molla simply obeyed Jesus' commandment: "love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends."

Gianna Emanuela was born on Holy Saturday, 1962. During Easter Week, Dr. Gianna's suffering intensified and she knew that she was dying. She wrote her husband as she lay dying: "Pietro, I was on the other side already and if only you knew what I saw. Someday I'll tell you."

A week after she gave birth she died with the simple words, "Jesus, I love you" on her lips. Little Gianna Emanuela later grew up to become a doctor and now cares for Alzheimer's patients in Italy. Her mother was canonized in 2004.

This was the earthly life of the patron saint of Curatio, St. Gianna Beretta Molla. She is so close to the hearts of the members of Curatio because she incarnates the love Curatio stands for.

From the Education Advisor Stephen J. Heaney, Ph.D.

Naturally Deaf?

In June, the *StarTribune* ran a commentary piece by a man born deaf to deaf parents, and now married to a deaf woman. He, and the entire "signing community," are worried that doctors will eventually find a way to eliminate deafness. As far as he is concerned, they should stop trying; there is nothing wrong with being deaf (nor, since he has recently become so, blind). Indeed, there are great things that would be lost should deafness (or blindness) be eliminated.

I would like to think that most of us would find this kind of declaration both uplifting and upsetting. The problem, I believe, lies in what one means by saying "There is nothing wrong with being deaf." In a way that is very true. In another way, it is quite false.

Let us give the uplifting element of the statement its due. The columnist points out that it was the discriminatory attitudes and acts of others, not deafness, that was the problem. For him, deafness seems "natural," not a disability but merely a difference. He appeals to the great art and discoveries of those who were themselves deaf or blind, or who were spurred on by disability to invent gadgets that have helped everyone. Furthermore, he points to the worrying example of those without disabilities who want to be "reshaped and remade" by surgery, people "not satisfied with being merely well" who long for some elusive "better." He doesn't want to be like that.

So here is the truth of his statement. Deaf or hearing, blind or sighted, ambulatory or confined to bed, with full or diminished mental faculties, we are all persons. We are all created by God, in His image. We share the same nature, and thus are all of equal worth and dignity. No one ceases to be a child of God, no one loses his worth, no one changes her nature, because of a physical shortcoming. Humanity is our essence; the number of fingers one happens to have is not essential.

Furthermore, since everything exists because God allows it to be and sustains it in existence, our diseases, injuries, and disabilities are somehow part of his plan. All the things that befall us, both pleasant and painful, are opportunities by which we can become better human beings, and come closer to Him. Those who embrace this truth are the better for it, and heroic examples for us all.

However, it is one thing to accept a condition over which one has no control, and learn to live well with it. It is quite another to say that something is what it is not: that a disability is not a disability, that healing is actually harm rather than gift.

In the attitude of remaking oneself physically, there is an implicit belief that human beings have no nature. If there is no nature to act as a reference point for what is fitting or unfitting for us, each individual is left to his own decisions about what he or she wants to be. But this is equally true of the attitude that deafness or blindness is merely a difference: there is no nature which one can say is either "working properly" or "disabled."

Those areas of knowledge that we call sciences are, in fact, attempts to name properly the things of the world according to how these things operate, and the goals of those operations. Medicine—indeed, all health care related fields—only make sense if there are such operations and goals discernible by rational creatures, that is, if there are actual natures in nature. To anyone who would suggest otherwise, the health care professional should promptly respond, "Nonsense. I work with these operations and goals every day. That is the center of my work: to restore human bodies to fullness of operation, so that the person can have as full a life as possible." If there are no natures, then the entire profession of health care is incomprehensible; "health care" then becomes nothing more than the work of mechanics, re-shaping the human body according to the desires of their "owners."

Deafness is a real loss to the person who is deaf, even if that person has learned to live, and live well, without hearing. It is the nature of human beings to hear. Those who cannot hear are not differently abled. They are disabled. Should they choose not to have that function returned to its fullness, that may be within their rights. But it is not living well with one's disability to deny the truth of the matter.

Suggested reading:

J. Budziszewski, "Designed for Sex." *Touchstone*, July/August 2005
<http://www.touchstonemag.com/archives/print.php?id=18-06-022-f>

Closing Prayer

Fr. Rolf Tollefson

Lord Jesus, you are the Divine Physician,
And the source of all life and health.

Give our elected officials the humility to know
That they are servants, not masters.
Give them the wisdom to realize
The every life has sacred value.
Give them the strength to resist the idea
That some lives can be sacrificed to save others
Or that killing the unborn is part of health care.

Give your people the courage to speak up
And to hold public officials accountable for their actions.

Save us, Lord Jesus, from a culture of death,
And let every reform in our public policy
Be based on the reform of our hearts and minds
In the light of your Gospel, for you live and reign forever and ever.

If you have comments or suggestions for this communique, contact Education Advisor/Editor Stephen J. Heaney at sjheaney@stthomas.edu.