EDITORIAL

This is the first issue of newsletter for year 2004. 2003 has been remembered as a year of SARS. Now as we enter into 2004, we are still living in the threat that SARS may be back again any time. The bible story of the ten virgins who wait for the bridegroom serves as a good reminder for us. Like the virgins, we need to keep watch and be prepared all the time.

May we ask God to fill our lamps with oil, and to give us a rejuvenated spirit everyday.

May the blessings of the Lord be with you and your family throughout the year.

Happy New Year.

MESSAGE FROM NEW MASTER

This is the first time I have the opportunity to reach the membership via the Newsletter since I was elected Master last June. The Guild has been busy with the production of the Golden Jubilee booklet and carrying on with the normal pastoral programme. In addition to Medical Sunday, Mass for Deceased Members and the re-institution of the Spiritual Gathering programme, the Guild has also participated in a pilot project on health care for priests and religious in the diocese. The Working group is due to report back to Diocese and we hope that with the blessing of the Bishop, we would be able to offer those who care for our spiritual health, a bit of our time in the care of their physical health.

One of the recommendations from the Diocesan Synod is for the formation of a multi-disciplinary body to look at healthcare issues, especially in the field of medical ethics. The healthcare project for priests had already resulted in doctors, nurses and allied health personnel coming together for one good cause. We will build on this goodwill amongst the healthcare professionals and liaise with Church experts in moral philosophy and theology to build-up resources in bio-ethics to enable both the Guild and the Diocese to better respond to topic issues of concern in Medicine as they arise in society.

Peter Au-Yeung
Master
NEW COUNCIL

Our new council has been elected in the 50th AGM. Dr. Peter Au Yeung, an Intensive Care Physician in Yan Chai Hospital, is our new Master. He has been a council member of the Guild of Catholic doctors in UK for years during his training at UK years ago. He contributed a lot in the discussion of controversial issues through his comprehensive knowledge in medical ethics. Being two sons’ father, he gave great support to functions of the Guild through his family’s participation. In the new council year he would like to support the Diocese in a more regular and systematic basis. Dr. Peter Fung and Dr. Michael Poon will continue to be our Financial Secretary and Honorary Secretary respectively. With God’s blessing we have new blood in the Council. Dr. Kris Leung and Dr. Joyce Ching are family physicians in OLMH. Dr. Stella Wong is a physician in TKOH. Together with old council members we hope we can serve our members and society well in daily lives.

G50th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Guild this year was held on 28th June 2003. We had the honour to have Bishop Joseph Zen to be our principal celebrant of the Thanksgiving Mass that night.

This year, our profession has been under extra stress as the outbreak of SARS early in March 03 has taken away precious lives of some of our friends, colleagues and Hong Kong citizens. We took the opportunity of the AGM to invite some of our frontline doctors of the Guild to share their experiences and thoughts during this fight of the disease. While there were fears and struggles in the hearts of the frontline doctors as in all lay people at that time, we saw the great strength and courage brought to our doctors from their faith while caring the patients. The encouraging responses from the floor enriched the sharing session much.

After the formality of AGM and the mass, we enjoyed the great buffet at the Caritas Restaurant, where we enjoyed a great time for reunion with friends and family members of the Guild.

GRADUATION MASS

We celebrated the graduation of Class ’03 on 22 June 2003. A number of graduates from both universities seated together to give thanks to our Lord for his blessings during the undergraduate years. We prayed for all new blood, for their doctors’ life and training will be difficult and harsh.
MEDICAL SUNDAY

This year we had the Medical Sunday mass on 12th October 2003 at Wah Yan College, Hong Kong. It was jointly organized by the Guild of St. Luke, St. Cosmos & St. Damian and Hong Kong Catholic Nurses’ Guild.

We were delighted to have Rev. Benedict Lam to be our main celebrant. Together with some senior members and close friends of Guild, representatives from Diocesan Commission for Pastoral Care, St. John’s Ambulance and Catholic hospitals, there were more than one hundred participants in the celebration. Dr. Francis Mok had shared his experience of working in hospitals during the SARS epidemics and inspired us the responsibility and mission to serve and sacrifice. We all thanked God for leading our lives in the past one year and prayed for the sick, medical and paramedical staff, our Catholic Diocese and Government.

MASS FOR DECEASED MEMBERS

The Mass for the deceased has been held on 9 November 2003 at the Chapel of Wah Yan College Hong Kong. Fr. Russell was the principal celebrant. Around 30 members joined the mass. We prayed for all souls, especially those who died of SARS. We asked our Lord to give us faith and hope in our eternal life.

GOSPEL SHARING

Acts of the Apostles Ch. 1
9 January 2004

Acts of the Apostles is the second volume of St. Luke’s Gospel. The most important character in Acts is the Holy Spirit. We will go through the descend, the effect, and the work of the Holy Spirit in Christian community. While waiting for the descend of the Holy Spirit, the Apostles and Holy Mary prayed together with one heart. Lord! Please let the Holy Spirit fill our hearts and guide our steps, especially at our difficult times.

DINNER MEETING WITH SR. HANNA KLAUS ON TEENSTAR

Hanna Klaus (Sr. Miriam Paul), M.D., F.A.C.O.G., is a Medical Mission Sister who directed the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Holy Family Hospital Rawalpindi, Pakistan, from 1961-66, and in Dhaka, Bangladesh from 1966-68. Currently she is the Executive Director of the Natural Family Planning Center of Washington, D.C., Inc. and the Teen STAR Program. She is a gynecologist who has conducted use-effectiveness research and training of teachers of the Billings Ovulation Method for 25 years, and the Teen STAR Program since 1980. Teen STAR, Sexuality Teaching in the context of Adult Responsibility, is an international proactive sexuality education program for teens, which currently operates in 20 countries. Holistic Sexuality is a program for college students offered either as a credit course, or an elective.

After conducting a two-week workshop on TEENSTAR in Korea, Sr. Hanna Klaus managed to squeeze a few days to stay in Hong Kong. It was our honour to invite her to give us a brief introduction on TEENSTAR. It was a short lecture held on 19 January 2004 at Caritas Restaurant, Caine Road. The Hong Kong Catholic Marriage Advisory Council, teachers and educational workers were also invited to attend the lecture. Sr. Hanna Klaus emphasized the teaching on the meaning of sexuality instead of consequence. The dramatic number of abstinence from sex and reduction in premarital pregnancy was evident as from her data.

This serves as a good start to gather people from the Guild, the Catholic Education Office, HKCMAC and teachers for sexuality teaching. To explore on the feasibility of TEENSTAR in Hong Kong would be a meaningful follow up task.
LIFE SUSTAINING TREATMENT AND
VEGETATIVE STATE
Scientific Advances and Ethical Dilemmas
Rome 17-20 March 2004

PROGRAM

Wednesday 17 March 2004

9:30 Opening session
Presentation
Opening Ceremony

10.00 Lecture:
Useful and unuseful sufferance in the biblical tradition (M. Frisina, Rome, Italy)

PART ONE: LIFE-SUSTAINING TREATMENTS

10:30 I Session
1. Definitions of therapy, treatment and care (E. Diamond, Chicago, USA)
2. Palliative cures and analgesia: Current objectives and methods (C.F. Gomez, Charlottesville, VA, USA)
3. Therapeutic obstinacy and futility of cures (G. Herranz, Pamplona, Spain)
4. Euthanasia: The need of a clarification about terminology (G. Miranda, Rome, Italy)

13:00 Lunch

15:00 II Session
5. Life Sustaining Treatments: Methods and current operational standards (R. Proietti, Rome, Italy)
6. Nursing Issues in Life-Sustaining Treatments (R. Marchetti, Rome, Italy)
7. The dilemma of modern resuscitation: Initiating or withholding treatments. (R. Pegoraro, Padua, Italy)
8. Nutrition and Hydration: Should They Be Considered a Medical Therapy? (K. McMahon, Overbrook, PA, USA)

16:45 Coffee Break

17:00 III Session
Life-Sustaining Treatments in:
9. Neonatal Intensive Care (M. Orzalesi, Rome, Italy)
10. Dementia (M. Trabucchi and A. Bianchetti, Brescia, Italy)
11. Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (P. Rossini, Rome, Italy)

18:30 Lecture:
Sufferance and death in contemporary culture (M. Bizzotto, Verona, Italy)

Thursday 18 March 2004

9:00 IV Session
13. Advance Directives and Living Wills (L. Palazzani, Rome, Italy)
14. The principle of proportionality in therapy: Foundations and applications criteria (M. Calipari, Rome, Italy)
15. Does the quality of life determine the value of a human being? (F. Compagnoni, Rome, Italy)

10:50 Coffee Break

11:10 V Session
16. Ethical considerations of Life Sustaining Treatments (I. Carrasco de Paula, Rome, Italy)
17. Juridical aspects in Life Sustaining Treatments: an international review (L. Marini, Rome, Italy)
18. Economic Aspects in Prolonged Life-Sustaining Treatments (E. Borgonovi, Milan, Italy)
19. Psychological Problems of Patients, Families and Health Professionals (S.J. Crawford, London, UK)

13:00 Lunch

Friday 19 March, 2004

9:00 VII Session
5. Results of neurophysiologic research in Vegetative State (A. Shewmon, Los Angeles, CA, USA)
6. The contribution of neuroimaging techniques in Vegetative State (S. Laureys, Liège, Belgium)
8. Permanent Vegetative State: Usefulness and limits of a prognostic definition (C. Borthwick, Melbourne, Australia)

10:50 Coffee Break

11:10 VIII Session
9. Forensic assessment issues in low level neurologic states (N.D. Zasler, Charlottesville, VA, USA)
10. Clinical management of patients in the Vegetative State (W. Schönle, Konstanz, Germany)
11. The Rehabilitation of patients at risk of Vegetative State (L. Sazbon, Tel Aviv, Israel)
12. Pharmacotherapy in low level neurologic states (N.D. Zasler, Charlottesville, VA, USA)

13:00 Lunch
15:00 Free communications

16:50 Coffee break

17:10 IX session
13. The practical dilemmas of treatment decisions: withholding or withdrawing treatment from a clinician's point of view (K. Andrews, London, UK)
15. Withdrawal of hydration and nutrition: A solution for the chronically ill? Possibilities and limits of hospital assistance (J. Lelkens, Maastricht, The Netherlands)
16. The possibility of home assistance: Involvement of the family (M. Sargent, Shipston on Stour, UK)

Saturday 20 March, 2004

9:00 X session
17. The subject in Vegetative State: For a personalistic view. (E. Sgreccia, The Vatican City)
18. Ethical problems in "Permanent" Vegetative State: Is it allowed to take decisions on a man's life based on probability? (M. Faggioni, Rome, Italy)
19. Permanent Vegetative State: Trojan's horse for the legalization of euthanasia? (G.L. Gigli, Udine, Italy)
20. Vegetative State and the risk of a new eugenetics (G. Dolce, Crotone, Italy)
21. Death as a gift (S. Leone, Palermo, Italy)

11:10 Coffee break

11:30 Interconfessional Bioethical Round Table
(in preparation)

13:00 Lunch

15:00 Individual and Institutional Experiences (Round Table)
Interventions of families, professionals, volunteers, health institutions.

16:30 Coffee break

16:45 A new solidarity to prevent the euthanasia tentation (Round Table)
Interventions of legislators, administrators, families and volunteer associations

18:15 Concluding Remarks

BIOETHICS UPDATES – INTENSIVE STUDY WEEKS IN ROME

29 March - 3 April, 2004
28 June - 3 July, 2004

PONTIFICAL REGINA APOSTOLORUM UNIVERSITY
School of Bioethics www.upra.org

Course
Respect for Unborn Life (Prof. Mario Palmaro, J.D.); The Dignity of Procreation (Fr Jose Maria Anton, LC, S.T.D.); Ethics in the Terminal Phase of Life (Dr. Claudia Navarin, Ph.D.); Medical Anthropology: Toward a Humanistic Medicine in a Technological Age (Dr. Armando Savignan, Ph.D.).

How are the courses given?
The classes are given in Italian with simultaneous translation into English. Each course consists of about twenty-four hours of classes. Each intensive week covers one-half of each course. The dates of the intensive weeks are from 29 March to 3 April and 28 June to 3 July, 2004 respectively. The classes are given from 8:30 to 12:15, 3:30 to 7:15 Mon. to Fri. and from 8:30 to 12:15 Sat.
FIAMC STATEMENT ON MARTY REPORT TO PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

VOTE ON EUTHANASIA AT THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

STATEMENT FOR PRESS RELEASE

January 19, 2004

On Thursday, 29 January 2004 the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe will hold a discussion on the Marty Report on Euthanasia (Doc. 9898), drafted by the Swiss Rapporteur of the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee, Mr Dick Marty.

Mr Kevin McNamara, Rapporteur of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights for the United Kingdom will submit his opinion document on the same issue.

The Marty report aims at introducing, in the Countries where they do not exit yet, laws exempting the physicians who help incurable patients put an end to their lives (if they request it) from legal prosecution. In other words, the Marty Report will ask all European Countries to promote the introduction of a euthanasia law, similarly to what has already been done in Holland and Belgium.

Although not coercive for the individual countries, the resolution, if approved, will constitute a tremendous element of pressure on national Parliaments, medical doctors and public opinion, and it could lead, in the future, to incentives for the countries permitting euthanasia and restrictions for those which oppose it.

As Catholic Doctors, we protest against the Marty report and its possible legal consequences.

1. First of all, we are afraid that it will exert a pressure on physicians (both as individuals and as a profession) to act against their conviction and to act against to the Geneva Human Rights Convention when it states that the mandate for the physician is for him "to preserve the utmost respect for human life from its beginning even under threat and I will not use my medical knowledge contrary to the laws of humanity".

In addition, we identify a risk that the exercise of the medical profession will be precluded in the future to physicians, who will not accept to perform euthanasia or physician assisted suicide, as it already happened for certain categories in some countries with reference to abortion. We demand that in all laws concerning medical ethical matters physicians and nurses are guaranteed the right to lawfully abstain from actions that are in conflict with their religious faith and/or moral convictions.

2. Recent medical research has shown that colleagues who are poorly trained in palliative medicine and colleagues who are overburdened are the ones seen to consider euthanasia and physician assisted suicide in difficult clinical situations. Notwithstanding the principal issue of euthanasia and physician assisted suicide, it must be considered outrageous if patients are killed or assisted in taking their own life because of poor medical conduct. We therefore demand that the European Council acts to encourage the individual governments to provide training of physicians in palliative medicine, both during their basic medical training and during their vocational training. We also find it important that palliative medicine be established as a medical speciality in all European countries in the same way that it has been done, for example, in the United Kingdom.

3. The role of the medical profession must never be that of killing patients. Provisions for optimal palliative care at the end of life, especially for the weak patient, are mandatory for a society that wishes to be characterised as advanced. This care should be offered in a loving environment where the patient does not feel himself a burden to neither his relatives nor the society. It is the responsibility of the society to guarantee such care facilities.

4. While we are against any participation of medical doctors in euthanasia or physician assisted suicide, at the same time we are against any therapeutic obstinacy that cannot cure patients, but only prolong the process of dying.

5. We protest against the use of physicians to provide an unethical and unnecessary medical solution to a problem that is basically of a social nature: Solitude of the elderly and poor care at the end of life. It is exactly these problems that prompt demands for euthanasia and physician assisted suicide. Recent documents produced by important professional societies, as the European Association of Palliative Care (EAPC) made this view very clear.

We strongly urge the Members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to vote against the draft resolution proposed by the Marty Report and to stand firmly against any attempt of promoting euthanasia and physician assisted suicide in Europe.

The Members should also feel the moral duty to be present during the debate on January 29th and to propose amendments to the Marty Report before the deadline of Wednesday 28 January at 3pm.

On behalf of the World Federation of Catholic Medical Associations (FIAMC)

Gian Luigi Gigli, MD

(Chairman, FIAMC)
Euthanasia revisited – a different viewpoint

I am strongly against euthanasia all along. I accept all the related ethical principles underlying the objection and see that euthanasia is something evil. I am quite proud of my standpoints and always ready to debate with anyone on the issue. But then I was silent when my mother asked for it.

My mother, age 65, suffers from recurrent oral squamous cell carcinoma. She had undergone three oro-facial operation within these few years, leaving her significant disfigurement of her facial appearance, completely toothless and dependent on puree diet. However, she was otherwise up and about and had a very sound mind. Last month, she was found to have recurrence again with extensive involvement up to skull base. There was on and off bleeding from the lesion and oral feeding became difficult. Our most capable professor in surgery surrendered to the situation. There was no more hope for a cure. Doloresic relieved her headache a bit but caused constipation and GI upset. She was low in mood (actually the whole family was low in mood) and became home-bound. She laid on the sofa all day long and could only took some fluid diet.

My mother is not a Catholic. However, she said that she was not afraid of death and actually looking forward to seeing it. It would be a blessing if she could just "go" during her sleep. "I prefer you give me a pill and end all this suffering", she said lightly to me. I found no words to respond to her quest. I knew that I could not and should not do this. But how reasonable her request is! I might ask the same if I were in her situation except that my faith might help me to tolerate the suffering a bit more because I might find meaning in the suffering from a religious perspective. However, I was unable to convey this message to her as she did not have the religious background. I prayed to God in my tears that she could be relieved of the suffering, even if she has to leave us earlier.....

A gleam of light in the darkness before the Chinese New Year. Assistance came from my oncology friends. He suggested palliative chemotherapy. Frankly speaking, I didn't have much confidence in the proposal but anyway, my mother accepted it. After the first course, her oral bleeding stopped and her discomfort over her face was lessened. She returned home and could resumed her previous oral feeding and most importantly, she enjoyed the Spring dinner in my home. This is a small miracle for me. May be my oncology friend is the angel sent by God to answer my prayer. Now, my mother (and my family) is living day by day. No discomfort in one day is already a blessing and we look towards this everyday. But deep in my heart, the quest of my mother is still echoing......

Francis

PSALMS 23

Yahweh is my shepherd, I lack nothing. In grassy meadows he lets me lie. By tranquil streams he leads me to restore my spirit. He guides me in paths of saving justice as befits his name. Even were I to walk in a ravine as dark as death, I should fear no danger, for you are at my side. Your staff and your crook ar there to soothe me. You prepare a table for me under the eyes of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup brims over. Kindness and faithful love pursue me every day of my life. I make my home in the house of Yahweh for all time to come.
Since the publication of the booklet needs a high cost, your financial support to the deep apperciated. Please send your donation by cheque payable to "Guild of St. Luke, St. Cosmas and St. Damian Hong Kong" to: 281, Queen's Road East, Hong Kong. Thank you for your support!!

COMING EVENTS

MONTHLY BIBLE SHARING

50TH ANNIVERSARY BOOKLET

We are ready to publish our 50TH Anniversary booklet after more than a year of preparation. Thanks to the devoted contributions from Kwan, Joyce, Sara, Stella that make the publication possible. Apart from our theme “Challenges of Catholic Doctors in a new era”, memories of the Guild in the past fifty years will appear in your eyes. It will be mailed to all members once the printing is finished.

Since the publication of the booklet needs a high cost, your financial support to the publication is deeply appreciated. Please send your kind donation by cheque payable to "The Guild of St. Luke, St. Cosmas and St. Damian Hong Kong" to: 281, Queen's Road East, Hong Kong. Thank you for your support!!

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