

## NEWS

### BUFFER ZONES AROUND ABORTION CLINICS

There was little good news in the summer about the protection of ethical medicine. But one very good piece of news was the Home Secretary's decision not to impose buffer zones around every abortion clinic in the land.



He concluded that such a move would be disproportionate to the scale of the problem. That decision was especially courageous given how shrill is the proabortion lobby. Clare McCullough of the Good Counsel Network has been repeatedly on television and radio and pointed out that those who pray and defend life are peaceful and do not harass women seeking abortion. But they do offer help and many hundreds of women have "turned around" as a result of the help they offer. On the other hand, proabortion organisations such as "Sister supporter" have been far from peaceful and have indeed created disturbances around clinics where they have demonstrated. The *Be Here for Me* campaign (picture) is run by women who were helped by people praying outside abortion clinics and seeks to protect the right to stand with those who need support.

We must hope and pray for their success so that organisations such as Good Counsel and 40 days for Life can and will be able to carry on their peaceful work, supporting women as they decide to keep their babies.

## BOOK REVIEWS

### CATHOLIC WITNESS IN HEALTH CARE. PRACTICING MEDICINE IN TRUTH & LOVE

EDITED BY JOHN M. TRAVALINE & LOUISE A. MITCHELL

REVIEWED BY PRAVIN THEVATHASAN

I found the entire book both readable and captivating. It strikes the right balance: orthodox and charitable. It covers a whole range, including reproductive health, pediatrics, surgery, psychology and, very interestingly, the formation of medical students. For the purposes of this review, I will examine some chapters I particularly enjoyed.

In his chapter on foundation of authentic medical care, J. Brian Benestad argues that at the heart of medical ethics is the idea of virtue. Unfortunately, people rarely speak of it. Instead, they are driven to speak of autonomy and rights. The two competing and most popular ethical theories taught in medical ethics courses are Kantian ethics and utilitarianism. They have little time for virtue.

In his chapter on Catholic anthropology and medical ethics, Peter J. Colosi asks what motivated Peter Singer to care for his terminally ill mother and break his own rules? Because Singer, for all his dreadful views, is human. We are driven by our love of individuals, not systems or charters or theories. Ours is a person-centered ethic. I find myself utterly moved by those who care for severely disabled people, people who at one level cannot contribute to the

### CATHOLIC WITNESS IN HEALTH CARE

*Practicing Medicine in Truth & Love*



EDITED BY  
John M. Travaline & Louise A. Mitchell

good of society but at another level give us so much.

In her chapter on reproductive health and the practice of gynaecology, Kathleen M. Raviele says that there are two meanings in the marital act, the unitive meaning and the procreative meaning. Both meanings ought always to be respected. Catholic physicians ought to develop expertise and evangelize.

Salpingostomy is the direct killing of unborn life and is unethical. The pregnancy rates after salpingostomy and salpingectomy are the same. Most interestingly, in a recent review, it is reported that nine women with pulmonary hypertension chose to continue with the pregnancy and they all survived.

The chapter on the formation of Catholic medical students is excellent. Medical formation is a time to gain technical competence but also to practice "the gift of self that is required to practice medicine." Science alone is not enough. What is needed is empathy. The Church considers health care as an integral expression of her mission to humanity.

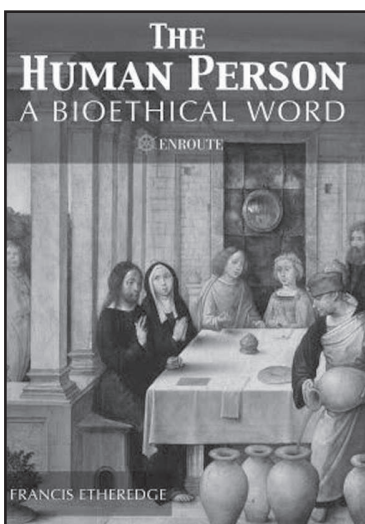
In her chapter on Catholic psychologists and the spiritual dimension, Wanda Skowronska cites Paul Vitz in noting that secular psychology has little to offer those who are suffering. In Christ, we have an unexpected new narrative. Suffering is the prelude to a new and extraordinary world of understanding. Christianity starts with suffering and ends with joy. Secular psychology starts with optimism and ends with pessimism!

Human nature is good and so is everything created by God. However, human beings possess a special dignity as created in God's image. That is the ultimate message of this splendid work.

Catholic Witness in Healthcare is published by The Catholic University of America Press.

## **THE HUMAN PERSON. A BIOETHICAL WORD BY FRANCIS ETHEREDGE**

**REVIEWED BY PRAVIN THEVATHASAN**



Bioethics is for everyone because it asks what it means to be a human person. In order to understand bioethics, we need to understand what it means to be persons. This is one of the messages of this important work. A certain paradox can be noted: science tells us that life begins at conception and this truth is clearer than never before.

Nevertheless, we carry out acts that destroy these embryos as never before. Evolutionary theory dictates that the fittest must survive. The disabled are thus to be got rid of. The survival of the fittest is regarded as appropriate because of another myth: the myth of overpopulation.

What Etheredge is saying makes perfect sense. Either the human person is a created word that demands absolute respect or it is a thing to be manipulated for utilitarian purposes. There is really no middle ground.

The human person is always a person in relation. Persons are thus called to be conceived by spousal union. This union is in harmony with the action of God the creator of the word. It is thus unethical for persons to be created by means of technology outside of the spousal union. The

spousal union is intended as relational and loving and it is fitting for the child so conceived to grow by means of such relations and, of course, the on-going relationship with God.

Bioethics these days is a secular discipline focused on biology. But, says Etheredge, the human person is a transcendent being. So it is entirely appropriate for there to be a chapter in this book on metaphysics: something not to be found in most works of bioethics.

Bioethics is not an abstract discipline. It should always be seen in the context of living out the vocation to marriage. What Etheredge has succeeded in doing so well is to argue the case for created beings as mysteries of divine action. We are biologically, psychologically, socially and spiritually what we are from conception and we are persons. Does that not resonate with the call for those of us in health care to adopt a holistic approach?

That Etheredge has given us good and even excellent reasons to respect human persons from conception is without doubt. What then are we to do with so-called "spare embryos"? It is my view that orthodox Catholics are going to come to different conclusions on this issue. Etheredge puts forward powerful arguments in favour of embryo adoption. The way it was conceived was, after all, hardly the fault of the embryo. Surely, it is reasonable for the embryo to enter into relationship? My own equally sincerely held view is that a tragedy has already ensued when its conception took place and little can be done to undo that tragedy. *Humanae Vitae* taught clearly, and Etheredge would certainly agree, that spousal union is the only morally sound means of conceiving and continuing in relationship with the other.

All in all, a brilliant work, combining ethical soundness with spiritual uplift. Thoroughly enjoyable and should be read by all, not just specialists, whatever that word means these days.

The Human Person. A Bioethical Word is Published by En Route Books & Media