Center News:

Pope John Center Moving To Boston, Adding New Office

Looking Forward, Looking Back

The Pope John XXIII Medical-Moral Research and Education Center, headquartered in St. Louis, Missouri since its inception, will move on July 1, 1985, to Braintree, Massachusetts, a suburb of Boston.

At the same time, the Center will open a regional office in Houston, Texas, under the direction of Dominican Father Albert Moraczewski, former Center president.

The Center has been located at the national headquarters building of the Catholic Health Association, now at 4455 Woodson Road, St. Louis, since the CHA established the Center in 1974. The relocation is prompted by the Center’s desire to provide additional services to its members and widely varied constituents. With offices located in two communities renowned for their medical academic facilities, the Center will be able to establish networks and linkages with a broad range of theologians, scientists, ethicists and others who are involved in medical-moral research and education.

The Center’s president, Fr. William M. Gallagher, in a current media release, expressed our aims succinctly: “Our Board of Directors feels that we have now reached a point in our evolution to maturity that we need to re-design our manner of providing service to our various constituencies, e.g., dioceses, bishops, and parish priests; health care providers, both institutional and individual; members of the academic communities, both theological and medical... having reached this maturity we recognize as well the need for reviewing and analyzing staff needs and workplace to enable us to continue our growth and our ever-developing services.”

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genetics, moral methodology, the impact of technologies and change upon the family, and other related topics. Supported by grants from the Knights of Columbus, these workshops draw attention and study to issues of health technology which demand a theological, scientific and ethical introspection.

The proceedings of the workshops have been published and are available to the 24,000 subscribers to the Center. In addition, the Center has published over a dozen book length reports and anthologies on other topics of current interest, such as genetics and an ethical evaluation of fetal experimentation.

The Center staff also wrote a monthly column for Health Progress, the journal of the Catholic Health Association, and publishes this monthly newsletter, Ethics and Medics. We have been co-sponsor with the Catholic Health Association in several educational programs aimed at hospital executives, governing board members and religious sponsors.

The Center’s Founding

The Center was originally established in response to a need for a Catholic-sponsored research and education institution focusing on medical-moral problems to which the bishops and other Church leaders could turn for advice. In their office as teachers of the Church’s authentic moral law, the bishops supported the development of the Center as a free-standing organization to assist their responding to the complex questions coming from health facilities, physicians and others concerned about the morality of newly emerging technologies.

Instrumental in the Pope John Center’s formation were John Joseph Cardinal Carberry, the late Bishop Joseph McNicholas, and Sister Mary Maurita Sengelaub, RSM, Catholic Hospital Association Executive Director, then of St. Louis. Under their auspices, a consultation involving 40 leading theologians, scientists, health administrators and others convened in St. Louis to consider the question of the Center. The result was a unanimous vote to proceed with the Center’s establishment and organization.

The Center’s Future

Funding from the Catholic Health Association, Knights of Columbus, subscriptions, sales of publications and membership fees have provided for ethicists, moralists, research and administrative personnel. It seems likely, noted Father Gallagher, that in the future the Center will rely more heavily on memberships and subscriptions to continue its work and broaden its base of support.

The Center’s work for the life and health of the Church has become known and respected throughout a widening spectrum of disciplines and interests. Requests for reprints from our books and periodicals come from such diverse and far-flung places as South America and New South Wales, from the Yukon to Rome. Again, in the words of Father Gallagher, Center president: “Every person concerned about the Gospel message and the way Catholic teachings meet the challenges posed by modern scientific technology is a beneficiary of the work of the Center.” The Center Board and staff are grateful for the support and interest through its first decade, and look to the Center’s new opportunities with renewed zeal.

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