

# A TRIBUTE AND AN OPPORTUNITY



This special section is a tribute to Fr. O'Rourke. It is also an opportunity to explore his contributions to Catholic health care ethics and an estimate of what we might learn from his work for "doing" health care ethics today and into the future.

Never before has *Health Progress* devoted a special section to a particular individual and his or her work. But then, not many individuals celebrate their 80th birthday having had as broad and profound an influence on Catholic health care and Catholic health care ethics as has Fr. Kevin O'Rourke, OP, JCD, STM. No one can match his accomplishments—several books (often used as textbooks) and more than 200 articles; countless consultations and presentations across the ministry (not to mention throughout the world); service on several ethics committees; the teaching of medical students, residents, and other health professionals; six years as CHA's ethicist; the creation of the Center for Health Care Ethics at Saint Louis University; and, currently, the exercise of a professorship at the Nieswanger Institute for Bioethics and Health Policy at the Stritch School of Medicine, Loyola University Chicago.

Over approximately 34 years working as a moral theologian in Catholic health care, Fr. O'Rourke has touched innumerable lives and influenced the decisions and practice of innumerable individuals and organizations. His sound judgment, wisdom, pastoral sensitivities, and sense of humor are legend. And for all of this, Catholic health care is greatly indebted.

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In addition to looking at the work and contributions of one individual, this special section is also an invitation to all who "do" ethics within Catholic health care to step back from our routines and reflect on how we do what we do, the contexts in which we do it, the many influences upon us, and the issues to which we respond.

It might be that Fr. O'Rourke's contributions or the reflections herein concerning those contributions will prompt us to new insights, new approaches, new sensitivities, and new resolves. As Therese Lysaught writes at the conclusion of her article: "Fr. O'Rourke's work over the past 30 years provides . . . the 'leaven' for these developments in health care ethics. May we, who carry on his legacy, rise to the occasion."

—Ron Hamel, PhD

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