

# Taking God on Rounds



**BY PAMELA  
SCHAEFFER, Ph.D.**

*Editor*

pschaeffer@  
chausa.org

**B**ring God along with you on rounds,” urges Fr. Myles Sheehan, SJ, MD, a medical expert we quote in the “Voices” featured in this issue’s special section.

Fr. Sheehan’s exhortation — excerpted from interviews for an upcoming CHA video resource — brings to mind related liturgical events that fall within the time period of this issue. Both All Saints’ Day on Nov. 1 and Christmas are about incarnation: about God embodied in the human, about taking God along.

While Fr. Sheehan is addressing physicians, incarnation — embodying God — applies to each of us as we go about the often gritty business of daily life and meet the challenges that accompany personal growth.

In the Christian context, personal growth is ultimately about incarnation: about opening ourselves to God and others, about becoming carriers of God’s revelation in the world.

Catholic health care professionals are expected to extend compassion and mercy to those in their care, to recognize that each one is a unique expression of God’s image. Catholics sometimes speak of “finding God,” or of “encountering Jesus” in others.

All Saints’ Day and Christmas, though, are not only about finding God in saints on the Christian calendar, people we imagine as being in a higher category than ours, or even exclusively about encountering God in Jesus, but also about finding God in ourselves, about recognizing the relationship between personal integration (the focus of two articles in our special section) and the Christian theology of incarnation.

I am reminded of the writings of Thomas Merton, the celebrated Trappist monk and author, who wrote, “For me, to be a saint is to be myself.” That statement, simple yet profound, is cited by Fr. James Martin, SJ, as the theme of his recent book *My Life with the Saints*. Martin said in an interview with Lisa M. Hendey that he hoped his book would lead readers to understand “that being a saint means being who you are, being the person who God created.” ([www.catholicmom.com/br\\_martin.htm](http://www.catholicmom.com/br_martin.htm)).

It may make us uncomfortable, even sheepish perhaps, to aspire to become a saint, a person who can’t help but “bring God along” because he or she embodies God. Uncomfortable because it seems pious in the treacly sense of the word, or egotistic — even a mark of overweening hubris — until we remember that Jesus — not the lofty Christ of some later Christian writings, but the Jesus portrayed in the Gospels — was a man who, like us, struggled with his own personal growth, then walked the gritty byways of a narrow world.

An ancient Christian doctrine, long honored in the East, and gaining currency today in the West, is that of “theosis,” or “deification”: the goal of Christian life is to become holy, deified, a “Christ-carrier,” in the words of Ignatius of Antioch, while remaining wholly ourselves. (One recent book on deification is *Theosis: Deification in Christian Theology*, edited by Stephen Finlan and Vladimir Kharlamov.)

While this theology of anthropology relates to all of us, those inclined to “bring God along” in the ministry of healing might readily understand it as integral to their work. ■