



**Diocesan Health Facilities, Roman Catholic Diocese of Fall River**  
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For Immediate Release  
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FALL RIVER, MA: Three diocesan health care professionals recently completed a year-long course administered by the National Catholic Bioethics Center (NCBC) in Philadelphia, PA and became certified under the National Catholic Health Care Ethics Program.

Daniel Brown, MD, medical director at Madonna Manor in North Attleboro, MA; Claudia Levesque, director of social services at Madonna Manor; and Raymond McAndrews, administrator at Marian Manor in Taunton, were sponsored by Monsignor Edmund J. Fitzgerald, executive director of the Diocesan Health Facilities, the system of long term care facilities sponsored by the Fall River diocese.

They join four other diocesan health care professionals in becoming certified by the National Catholic Health Care Ethics Program. Completing the course in 2008 and also sponsored by Monsignor Fitzgerald, were: Kathy St. Laurent, bioethics instructor at Coyle-Cassidy High School in Taunton; Diane Rocha, social worker at Marian Manor in Taunton; Joanne Roque, clinical services director for the Diocesan Health Facilities; and Marianne Sullivan, nurse practitioner and clinical project facilitator with the Diocesan Health Facilities.

The National Catholic Certification Program in Health Care Ethics provides a year-long program that deals with the major bioethical issues that arise in modern medical and research environments. Father Tad Pacholczyk is director of education at the National Catholic Bioethics Center (NCBC) in Philadelphia and a priest of the Fall River diocese.

“I think that the certification program is very important because there are so many ethical health questions we deal with in our facilities,” Monsignor Fitzgerald said. “Being in the long-term care industry, we need to have an understanding of the ethical and religious directives (ERDs) and of Catholic principles. We think it is a very important investment.”

The participants went through an intensive, year-long course to achieve their certification that included weekly assignments, online interactions, and teleconferences and a final conference in Philadelphia where each person participated in a one-on-one interview, a mock ethics committee, and the presentation of a thesis paper on a specific topic of their choosing.

Daniel Brown, M.D., Madonna Manor’s Medical Director and the first physician in the Diocesan Health Facilities system to become certified, said the “topic of ethics is often filled with misconceptions and high emotions when it is approached from the generic sense. The course provided us with a valuable roadmap to navigate through and reconcile these at times seemingly incongruent issues.”

As Director of Social Services at Madonna Manor in North Attleboro, Claudia Levesque was a member of the home's ethics committee and familiar with ERDs, "but the course quickly challenged me to re-familiarize myself and to learn how to apply each and every one, even those that don't typically surface in the nursing home setting. We were given very difficult, often heart wrenching situations that people struggle with and we were taught how to help with compassion, but also with faith, always referring back to the ethical directive and strengthened by these Catholic moral teachings." During the course, issues were explored throughout the spectrum of life, from pre-conception through end of life concerns. All of the challenges that arise at these stages are very complicated, but after using the ERDs to reason through these issues, "I felt personally enriched and strengthened in my faith, and professionally, I felt empowered to use the ERDs to help residents and families make decisions that may challenge their prior medical and moral understandings."

According to Ray McAndrews, administrator at Marian Manor, "The course provides the Catholic health care worker with information needed to deliver the proper end of life care to our residents. The information learned in the course allows the ethics committee in our home to reach out to residents and their families in their time of need. The ERDs provide a template that every health care worker in our facility must follow, regardless of their beliefs."

There are currently four Diocesan Health Facilities staff members enrolled in the bioethics certification program. They are Thomas Healy, Administrator at Catholic Memorial Home in Fall River; Jennifer Davis, Assistant Administrator at Catholic Memorial Home; Manuel Benevides, Administrator at Sacred Heart Home, New Bedford; and Michael Medeiros, Administrator at Our Lady's Haven, Fairhaven.