

## **Loneliness in the Context of Illness**

A Catholic / Jewish Dialogue

Co-sponsored by the Center for Bioethics in collaboration with the Bioethics Institute of New York Medical College as a monthly interfaith academic and clinical colloquium entitled *Spirituality, Religious Wisdom, and the Care of the Patient*

[To view the Web site for this series, please click here.](#)

December 13, 2004

5:30 pm - 7:30 pm

New York-Presbyterian Hospital  
Clark Conference Center, Rooms 1, 2, & 3  
Milstein Pavilion, Ground Floor  
177 Fort Washington Avenue  
New York, NY 10032

Drs. Ruth Fischbach, John Driscoll, and Alan Astrow offered touching dedications to the memory of Dr. Steven Miller, a Planning Committee member and moderator for this colloquium whose humanism was an inspiration to all.

Helen Alvare, JD, Associate Professor of Law for the Columbus School of Law at the Catholic University of America, and Rabbi Tsvi Blanchard, PhD, Director of Organizational Development at the CLAL Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership, showcased a dialogue that focused on loneliness in the context of illness from Catholic and Jewish spiritual perspectives. The evening included clinical case discussions and relied on audience participation. The presenters discussed the troubling and profound spiritual concerns experienced by patients, families, doctors, nurses, students, and other healthcare professionals that arise in the setting of illness and loss.

At completion of the colloquium, participants better understood that loneliness is a universal phenomenon; and that all major world religions have grappled with devising responses to loneliness, in the context of illness, that can be soothing and healing for patients, families, doctors, nurses, and other caregivers. The colloquium stimulated reflection about the inner experience of illness and healing, and explored ways in which spiritual awareness may contribute to improving patient care and relations with their caregivers.