



From L – R: Tom Liautaud, Mission Doctors, President of the Board of Directors, Dr. Gina Lawson and Archbishop José H. Gomez. (Photo courtesy Casey Ramsey, U.M.K.C.)



Local Physician Honored As Catholic Doctor Of The Year

By Marty Denzer
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KANSAS CITY — Since 2009, the Mission Doctors Association has selected one physician nationwide as the Catholic Doctor of the Year, honoring them with the “Making a Difference” award, presented during the annual White Mass for Healthcare Professionals at the Cathedral of Our Lady in Los Angeles.

On October 23, 2016, Gina Lawson, D.O., a hospitalist with more than 25 years’ experience in hospital care, all with St. Luke’s Health System, received the Making a Difference Award from Los Angeles Archbishop Jose Gomez and Tom Liautaud, president, Mission Doctors’ Board of Directors.

A hospitalist is a relatively new term used for physicians who specialize in caring for hospitalized patients.

She attended medical school at Kansas City’s University of Health Sciences, and completed her residency training in Internal Medicine at UMKC Medical School. Lawson is board certified by the American Board of Internal Medicine and has been on staff at St. Luke’s since 1989. She also serves as a Preceptor (instructor) at the Kansas City University of Medicine and Biosciences.

She has worked caring for the homeless in Kansas City and is currently serving the poor and sick in a mountainous area of Jamaica on a 10-day medical mission trip, her second mission trip to Jamaica’s people in need.

A member of Good Shepherd Parish in Smithville, Lawson, who is married with two teenaged children, impressed many with her caring commitment to the sick, the homeless and the discouraged. Father Greg Haskamp, formerly pastor of Good Shepherd wrote the Mission Doctors Association a letter nominating Lawson as Catholic Doctor of the Year, as did her husband, a chaplain at St. Luke's and numerous others. It was noted that she brought spirituality into patient care, she prayed with the patients. Lawson was humble, saying, "In my mind, I don't necessarily deserve this award."

The chaplain wrote, "I have observed her sitting with patients and family members, focusing intently on their concerns as though she has nowhere else to be in that moment. Gina listens for her patients' spiritual concerns, she brings the healing presence of Jesus into the doctor-patient relationship, and she prays with patients when they are open to sharing prayer." She also serves as a Eucharistic Minister and brings patients Communion.

Mission Doctors Executive Director Elise Frederick said Catholic doctors are called to action on behalf of our brothers and sisters around the world. This award is given in recognition of the efforts of one doctor who has responded to Christ's call to 'Heal the Sick' as a member of our Catholic faith community and in doing so has made a World of Difference. ... Mission Doctors is honored to recognize the path Dr. Lawson has chosen to serve as a witness to God's love for his children."

Lawson is also active in St. Luke's Hospice program. "The patients there have many spiritual needs," she said, "on their road to heaven. Working with them is a blessing to me, it energizes me."

The recognition and award, she said, "is not about me. It's about all those who helped mold me. I accepted it on behalf of every nurse, nurse's aide and physician who has taught me to be faithful and to treat everyone in this manner."

To learn more about Mission Doctors Association, visit www.MissionDoctors.org.