

November 1964

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Recommended Citation

Marren, John W. (1964) "Activities of the Chicago Catholic Physicians' Guild," *The Linacre Quarterly*: Vol. 31: No. 4, Article 8.
Available at: <http://epublications.marquette.edu/lnq/vol31/iss4/8>

Activities of the Chicago Catholic Physicians' Guild

REVEREND JOHN W. MARREN*

The Catholic Physicians' Guild of Chicago was activated at the request of His Eminence, Albert Cardinal Meyer, in a charter meeting on June 20, 1961. The growth of the membership has been steady but not spectacular. It was and is the desire of the Cardinal that the Guild should represent a desire on the part of the Catholic medical men for this association without any kind of promotion that would produce a large membership that was compulsory in any sense.

Executive committee meetings are held each month. The principal areas of concern at the present time are a plan for the medical care of the religious in our archdiocese and assistance for the medical missions, both material and personal. It is through these meetings that the work of the various committees is outlined and that the Guild program is an active one.

Twice a year all Guild members are asked to participate in our program and it has been felt from the beginning that this is not too much to ask of anyone, no matter how busy he might be. It has been the object of the planning committee to make these general gatherings interesting and professional enough that the Catholic personnel of our Archdiocese would find the programs attractive, profitable and timely.

Our general meeting on May 2,

1963 was entitled "Human Experimentation, Evaluation of Drugs." Presiding at the meeting was the chairman of our program committee, Dr. Vincent Collins, Director of the Department of Anesthesiology of Cook County Hospital. The speakers were: Theodore Klumpp M.D. of New York whose subject was "Aspects of Development of New Drugs"; R. K. Richards M.D. of Chicago spoke on "Clinical Evaluation of New Drugs"; and Rev. Thomas O'Donnell, S.J. of Woodstock, Md. discussed "Moral Aspects of Human Experimentation." This program was presented at the Palmer House in Chicago.

Our annual Communion Mass is observed near the feast of St. Luke at Holy Name Cathedral. Last year, on October 27, the speaker at our Communion Brunch was Rt. Rev. Msgr. John C. Knott, Director of the Family Life Bureau of the N.C.W.C., who spoke on the modern secular overemphasis on sex in marriage. (Editor's Note: c.f. THE LINACRE QUARTERLY, August, 1964.)

This year's annual meeting was held in conjunction with the Committee on Medicine and Religion of the Illinois State Medical Society at the Society's annual convention in the Sherman Hotel in Chicago, and was a seminar on Religion and Medicine. The president of our Guild, Dr. Harold B. Haley, Professor of Surgery at Stritch Medical School served as moderator. The participants were Rev. Meredith Thomas, Pastor of the First Baptist

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Church in Mattoon, Illinois; Dr. Paul S. Rhoades, Professor of Medicine at Northwestern University; Rev. John W. Marren, Pastor of Holy Trinity Church, Chicago, and Rabbi Ephraim H. Prombaum of the Chicago Board of Rabbis.

One of the projects undertaken by our Guild was a television series on station WTTW (Channel 11) in Chicago. This was a series of 13 half-hour segments from January 7th through March 31st. It was aimed at using the TV medium as a teaching medium, telling the story of medicine as applied to the situations affecting daily life. It brought the viewing public face to face with doctors from the various fields of medicine, gave them insight into their approach to the everyday problems faced by people, and revealed the moral sense that our doctors bring to their practice. The series was entitled, "Life, Death and Hippocrates." Each segment included two lay people, a man and a woman as interviewers, along with two or three doctors (usually three), and often a priest who was active in the field concerned with the subject of that evening. The general titles were: "Respect for Life"; "The Family"; "The Parent-Child Relationship"; "The Exceptional Child"; "Sex Education"; "Medical Institutions"; "Surgery"; "Psychiatry"; "Research and the Rights of Patients"; "The Dying Patient"; "Rehabilitation"; "Geriatrics"; "Medical Missions."

Last year when an attempt was made to change the policies of the Illinois Public Aid Commission to use state

funds to defray the cost of contraceptive devices and information for indigent people on their rolls, the Guild decided to make a public statement on the matter and supply all the parties involved with our conclusions on the basis of a study we made of the practical and financial problems associated with the use of oral contraceptives in tax-supported programs. We did not endeavor to stress our point of view in the matter, but we did think the time opportune to press for recognition of at least a minimal moral standard in the area of discussion. The Commission made no distinction regarding the marital status of the recipients of these devices and information nor showed any concern about the age of those who would receive the contraceptives, including the hormonal drugs used to suppress ovulation.

Our Guild endeavored to alert our doctors to the necessity of participating in the activities of their various level medical societies. An incident highlighting this necessity was the approval by one Society of the policies of the Aid Commission. The commendation came at a meeting attended by only a portion of the members of the committee and there seemed to be no influence at all on the part of any Catholic doctor on the committee. This resolution of approval was quite effective when it was publicized in the daily press and seemed to indicate to readers that all the doctors in the area covered by the society were in favor of this change in Public Aid policy.