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## Medicine and Morals: An Address Delivered at a Meeting of the St. Luke's Guild of Boston (Continued from September Issue)

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"STERILIZATION SAVES WOMEN FROM CANCER"

This is, to say the least, misleading, and it is in this way that the press can form opinion. It would be interesting to know whether the writer of this headline is in favor of sterilization or just simply failed to understand exactly what Dr. Dresser said. In any case the fact remains that the press by inuendo, by over-emphasis, by suppression, by its editorial columns and by its cartoons can and does influence public opinion, even in moral matters. It is also a fact that the press needs to be watched when it steps beyond its sphere as a purveyor of news. This writer would say that the greatest enemy to the freedom of the press is the press itself.

MEDICINE AND MORALS

(An address delivered at a meeting of the St. Luke's Guild of Boston)

By FRANCIS J. DORE, S.J., M.D.

(Continued from September Issue)

FROM a biological viewpoint, the two main instincts in man are self-preservation and race preservation, *i. e.*, the chief ends of existence are to live and to transmit life. Man, therefore, goes against his nature by using the sex act merely as a means of sex pleasure, whereas the pleasure attached is simply to ensure the end of the function, which is not selfish. In animals, the sex instinct can be aroused only at appropriate seasons; in man, it may be excited at any time he wishes, and therefore he has been endowed with reason for his guidance, and with free will for the control of the sex inclination. Performing this act, and using contrivances which will frustrate the end of the act, is like using language to conceal the truth, and a lie is never justified, even by birth-controllers. It is analogous to the horrible practices of the pagan Romans, who had vomitoria built adjacent to their dining rooms, so that when they had eaten and drunk to repletion, they could go outside and take an emetic, and then return to further engorgement with food and drink. It is a known fact that passion uncontrolled by nature produces lack of respect and finally the loss of conjugal esteem. History clearly shows us that those who seek happiness just for itself never find it, and repeated failures simply add to their sense of frustration and defeat.

If birth control is moral, then masturbation, or any other sex perversion is moral. Even such a person as George Bernard Shaw calls birth control "mutual masturbation." A common argument used is that we interfere with nature in many legitimate ways; *e. g.* we cut our hair, shave, wash our faces, cook food, wear false teeth and clothes, etc. Why should this matter alone be sacred? The answer is, of

course, that it belongs to the moral sphere, whereas those other actions have no more moral significance than has a game of golf. In the light of nature, they are all neutral actions, neither good nor bad in themselves, and having no real bearing on the accomplishment of human destiny. Another objection that is urged sometimes is that nature herself destroys millions of the elements of procreation, and to add one more to these millions, sacrificed by nature, is surely no crime. But if those who argue in this way knew anything of biology, they would be aware of the fact that nature allows such superabundant elements to perish for the very purpose of making procreation more sure and certain. It is in order that one element may attain its end, and the end of the act itself, that it is reinforced by so many others. Moreover, just because millions of deaths occur each year in the world, no one would be acquitted of crime if he should murder Margaret Sanger or any other birth-controller.

But it may be asked, "Doesn't the Church herself nowadays permit birth control, tacitly at least, by supporting what is designated the Rhythm Theory?" Well, first of all, it is probably not an exaggeration to say that this theory is supported by so many proofs on the part of skilled gynecologists that it is more likely to be accepted as a scientific fact than many other things which are claimed to be facts, and which are not based on such strong evidence. Secondly, this theory supports only perfectly natural and normal actions, whereas the methods of contraception imply the use of artificial interferences with those normal actions. By unlawful birth control, an act is placed in such a way that it is refused its natural consequences. Moreover, it should be remembered that no group of theologians ever has held that every married couple must have the most numerous progeny possible. The Church has raised to its altars saints, who, though married, lived lives of perpetual virginity. Since total abstinence is allowed in the married state, abstinence at stated intervals is also permissible for good reasons. The married state was elevated to the sacramental stage by our divine Lord, and is blessed by the Church, for the mutual comfort and assistance and inspiration which husband and wife render to each other, as well as for their procreative function of assisting the Creator to fill the places of the rebel angels who fell from heaven. At the same time, the Church certainly counsels prudence on the part of any adviser on this subject, whether physician or lay person, since anyone may go to the opposite extreme, and forget that actually the propagation of the race is the primary, even though not the exclusive, purpose of marriage.

Sterilization is another topic which is being much discussed at present, and, in some of the states, has become a law. This is in flagrant violation of the personal liberty guaranteed by the Constitu-

tion of the United States. All through history is noted a struggle to get the rights of the individual recognized, and recognized as rights, not by the arbitrary will of the majority, but rights founded in human nature. If we allow persons, no matter how many, to say what is proper in the matter of imperilling our rights, then later on others will come along with some different notions against the sacredness of individual integrity. Some of the would-be legislators of this matter have ludicrously shown how little they know about its consequences, as was witnessed in a Southern state a year or two ago, when one of the debaters on the subject attempted to show of what small import the operation was by stating that "everyone knows that a person can be sterilized and unsterilized at will." And there was the famous case of the social worker in Washington who, when in doubt, gave to the unfortunates she met, words to spell, which, it was said, would be too hard for the average college professor to spell correctly, and on her verdict of failure in the spelling test, sterilization was ordered. This case is merely one indication of the absurd lengths to which enthusiasts will go if uncontrolled. We know that there must be some proportion between a crime and its punishment. Would a thief be punished by sterilization? The sovereign state has no arbitrary right over the life of a man, but only where he has forfeited the right, and his life is taken as a punishment. But this mutilation is not for any crime, it is not a punishment in any sense. It is really only to save the expense of caring for the afflicted. And when once individual rights are violated for the sake of money, there is no stop to wrong-doing. Killing the unfortunates will be the next easy step.

The Catholic Church is often attacked for its laws in regard to marriage. Yet many of us remember when a divorced person was ostracized in polite society. But gradually, and little by little, we became accustomed to divorce: "This was an exceptional case," "There was really nothing else to do," "The man was a brute," etc., with the result that now the number of divorces in these United States of ours is alarmingly greater each year than that of any other so-called civilized nation. So it will be with sterilization, unless the saner legislators stop its further progress.

A Catholic physician who follows the ordinances of his Church, which expresses for him the voice of God, will certainly at times be called upon to make sacrifices for his faith. But everyone gladly makes sacrifices for what he really desires. Those who have faith know that there is an eternal country for which our lives here are a preparation; and if we desire to live there in happiness with Almighty God, when it comes our time to die, we are prepared to sacrifice whatever is necessary rather than risk losing that priceless boon. This month

of May will see the canonization at Rome of Blessed Thomas More. He was undoubtedly one of the finest intellects of his time; he was the Lord Chancellor of England, the friend of the King; yet he was so willing to sacrifice his life rather than be false to his faith, that he mounted the scaffold and laid his head on the block with a merry jest. His life is a striking answer to the admonition of our Lord, which ought to be the motto of every Catholic physician: Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, but to God the things that are God's.

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## GUILD NOTES

### FEDERATION OF CATHOLIC PHYSICIANS' GUILDS

**LOCAL ACTIVITY.** To the larger Catholic hospitals throughout the United States, in every city where a Guild has not been established, notices have been sent urging the formation of Guilds and offers have been made of assistance to organize. It is too soon to expect results, but inquiries have already come from New Castle, Pennsylvania and Huntington, West Virginia.

**FOREIGN CORRESPONDENCE.** Dr. Henri Bon, President of the regional committee of the Société Médicale de Saint Luc, Saint Come et Saint Damien in Besancon, France, wrote for information concerning Catholic institutions in the United States: medical colleges, hospitals, societies of physicians, of dentists, of nurses, etc. The data was furnished by the Federation officers. Statistical information which Dr. Bon collected from many parts of the world, has been inserted in the Appendix of a *Precis de Médecine Catholique*, which he has recently published. The book treats most exhaustively of many religio-medical subjects throughout its 700 pages.

**CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN NEW YORK CITY.** Unofficial inquiry has been made regarding medical services to parochial schools. Our children in New York City receive the same attention as that accorded the pupils in the public schools. Every second year each child in the primary grades receives a general examination by a Board of Health physician. Nurses examine the sick children daily and arrange for treatment. The doctor's attention is called when necessary. Diphtheria immunity tests are made and the children are immunized when parents' consent can be obtained. The latter is the big stumbling block, because many do not appreciate the security offered. Tests for vision are made by the teachers who have been taught the use of the Snellen test card.

As to the high schools, both public and parochial, the pupils' routine examinations are made by the family doctor or are arranged for by the principal of each school. Usually a physician is selected who contracts to examine the students in groups for a small fee per capita. The members of our local guilds can help by administering diphtheria toxoid and by vaccinating free in worthy cases.

Milk is regularly supplied to pupils in the primary schools and hot lunches are supplied by the Relief Administration to needy children in our parish schools.

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**MANHATTAN GUILD**—The Reverend Dr. Thomas V. Moore, Benedictine monk, physician, psychologist, psychiatrist, one of the three foremost experimental