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Letter from the Philippines ...

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Letter from The Philippines . . .

We wish to congratulate our American colleagues for providing this medium of international correspondence of "Letters" from various parts of the world.

Here we are blessed with the good fortune of being a Catholic country, through the legacy left us by Spain. Next year, the 400th anniversary of the arrival of Christianity in the Philippines will be celebrated with appropriate commemoration. As an organized effort, however, medical practice under Catholic auspices here dates back to the foundation of the Catholic Physicians' Guild of the Philippines in 1936. Through the initiative of Reverend Francisco del Rio, O.P., then regent of the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Santo Tomas, the Guild had for its nucleus in its original membership the faculty members of said University, the Catholic University of the Philippines.

Gradually gaining momentum, the Guild finally achieved full-scale efforts in 1959. This was the good fortune given us during our own incumbency at that time. This is the same framework of activities pursued for the group in metropolitan Manila. Outside of Manila, diocesan chapters have been established which plan their own programs.

Briefly, the Manila group has adopted the following pattern:

1. Bi-monthly spiritual and cultural reunions. After Holy Mass and Communion, Guild members meet at breakfast and are then addressed by a distinguished Catholic leader speaking on vital problems of the day. The talks are not necessarily medical and are most enlightening and cultural.

2. On alternate months, the Guild presents evening symposia on medico-moral problems. The general pattern follows the presentation of a specific problem from the medical, legal and ethical viewpoints. To augment the effectiveness, effort is made to hold these meetings with other professional groups. Joint sessions have been held with the Filipino Nurses' Guild, the Catholic Lawyers' Guild, Philippine Medical Association, Philippine Hospital Association, and others.

3. Apart from these metropolitan activities, Guild speakers visit the out-of-Manila diocesan chapters to present similar discussions.

4. Finally, for the benefit of other physicians, the Guild publishes and distributes an official journal, *The Medical Forum*. In the journal are published the proceedings of the various symposia held in Manila and other articles of interest, particularly publications from Rome.

Equally important are other efforts which include a Counselling Center; the annual Christmas drive for medicines for the charity clinics; the annual spiritual retreats for physicians; participation in over-all Catholic Action, and sending delegates to congresses of International Federations of Catholic Medical Associations. Regional congresses for Catholic physicians have also been inaugurated. In January 1960 the First Asian Congress for Catholic Physicians was held in Manila. In 1962 the II Congress was held in Saigon and just prior to the Eucharistic Congress in Bombay, the III Asian Congress will be held in the same city, November 25-28.

As a fitting climax, for the moment, of Philippine dedication, the Guild won its bid, presented in the last International Congress in London in 1962, to hold the next meeting in Manila in 1966.

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