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Letter...

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LETTER ...

Message from India

You will recall that in my last message I looked forward to my participation in the annual convention of the National Federation of Catholic Physicians' Guilds of the U.S.A. in Chicago during September, 1980. As most of your members who were present in Chicago probably know, that meeting was excellent and I enjoyed being present. What impressed me most was your zeal and the involvement that you demonstrated in dealing with various ethical problems including those that have just reared their heads. I was also impressed with the wide representation from Washington State to Florida and New York to Los Angeles and Hawaii.

This conference most certainly stimulated me and I really wish that many others from Africa, Asia and Latin America would have been present.

My stay in the U.S.A. was rather short; it entailed traveling from New York to Chicago and back. During those few days I again realized, after a period of five years, that the U.S.A. is a home to people from all over the world — Europeans, Latin Americans, Asians, Africans, West Indians, Australians and others. This being so, I wondered why it was that no Catholic physician of Asian or African origin, domiciled in the U.S.A., attended the NFCPG meeting in Chicago. I decided to ask some of the Asian Catholic doctors whom I knew and met in Chicago and New York. Some had not heard of the NFCPG and others did not want to hear of it! They were far too busy raking in the filthy lucre. But the question still remained — what should be done? This is a problem not only for the U.S.A., but also for all of us living in other parts of the world.

In India, the major concentrations of Catholics are in urban areas such as Bombay, Bangalore, Goa and the various cities of Kerala. Elsewhere, the numbers are small and by that I mean

in 10's rather than 20's. However, one should not gain the idea that in the big cities mentioned above our numbers are large. They are small, at most 200-300, but here again we have not succeeded in involving all our Catholic physicians in the activities of the Indian Federation of Medical Guilds. Why is it and what must we do? I feel this is a question that we should discuss internationally. Any suggestions from your readers would be welcome to us in India.

I should like to conclude by placing on record my amusement and also my great respect for His Eminence, Cardinal John Patrick Cody. A mere sentence such as this will not suffice. Permit me to elaborate. After the stimulating last session of the day I went up to my room, changed and returned downstairs to attend the formal banquet. I was a bit early and knew no one present. Suddenly I was approached by one of the directors of the NFCPG and introduced to Cardinal Cody. It was most stimulating talking to His Eminence and I loved every second of the 30 minutes that we spent talking together, either alone or in a group. Fortunately I was early and I was not so ashamed of hogging his attention. For me the great moment came a little later! A young medical student and his wife, from the distant west coast, came in and were introduced to His Eminence in the usual way: "This is Jack and Mary, etc." The students said "fine," "great." "What is your name?" His Eminence replied, "John Cody." Jack and Mary, not realizing to whom they were talking, then proceeded to ask from where he came, and back came the reply, "Chicago." Seconds later, beads of perspiration appeared on Jack's brow. The penny had dropped. Jack, realizing his faux pas, turned round and said to His Eminence: "Gee, that was some introduction!" We all laughed. As for me, the humility and sincerity of Cardinal Cody came through. This was certainly a moment to remember.

— Dr. C. J. Vas, Bombay