

February 1967

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### Recommended Citation

Laforet, Eugene G. (1967) "'Casement': A Proposal to the Guild of St. Luke of Central City," *The Linacre Quarterly*: Vol. 34 : No. 1 , Article 20.

Available at: <http://epublications.marquette.edu/lnq/vol34/iss1/20>

# "CASEMENT": A PROPOSAL TO THE GUILD OF ST. LUKE OF CENTRAL CITY

EUGENE G. LAFORET, M.D.

The Guild is a unique organization — at least in potency — but failure to recognize its real purposes, or to implement them, has brought it to what must be frankly characterized as a moribund state. In a pluralistic society many sincere Catholic physicians question whether, indeed, a ghetto-like organization of physicians united only by the common bond of a particular religion serves any useful purpose. In fact, they believe that bearing quiet witness to Catholicism in their professional and civic activities, without formal membership in a Guild, is much to be preferred. But actually the reasons for existence of a Guild today, though changed, are more compelling than those adduced in the past, when Catholic physicians felt the need to unite almost for reasons of self-preservation. To remain viable, the Guild must assume responsibility in areas where its unique structure and membership can be employed to best avail. As an example of an appropriate area, the concept of "Casement" is suggested.

The problem of homosexuality has both religious and medical facets. It is widespread and refractory to current methods of treatment. It is of concern to the confessor, to the psychiatrist, and to the public at large. It reaches into colleges, seminaries, and the armed forces. The priest confronted by a penitent with

this problem has no satisfactory guidelines for giving advice, and no place to turn for assistance. The psychiatrist discourages patients with this problem for fear of building up a clientele of a particular type, which might reflect adversely on his practice. Lack of information and lack of interest have thus conspired to lose these patients by default. The Guild of St. Luke, by virtue of its integrating function, professional interest, and Catholic background, could do much to improve the situation.

Among the more promising methods of treatment is a group-therapy arrangement, with a format somewhat akin to that of Alcoholics Anonymous. Conducted under Catholic auspices, perhaps in a hospital setting, with patients, priests, psychiatrists, and other interested individuals in attendance, and under the aegis of the Guild, much could be done and much could be learned. Such a clinic or meeting might well become a prototype for others elsewhere. It would improve the outlook for "cure" of the Catholic patient, since both psychiatric *and* moral aspects could be covered, something that neither priest nor psychiatrist can do alone.

The Guild, if it considers the project worthy of its attention, could undertake to establish a pilot program, with interested parties invited

to participate. These might include psychiatrist members of the Guild, non-member psychiatrists, physicians concerned with the problem, psychologists, priests, and others.

Merely for purposes of ready reference and to avoid obvious identification, it is suggested that the project be called simply "Casement," after Sir Roger Casement, the Irish patriot executed in 1916, who may or may not have been himself a victim of the problem but who certainly had enlightened ideas on its nature and tragedy. "Casement" would be primarily a *service*, and secondarily an *investigative project*. It would be publicized *only* by word of mouth. It would *not* be written up in the diocesan newspaper. It would *not* keep records, except in a general way for purposes of evaluating its effectiveness. It would *not*

involve money in *any way*, either for dues or expenses. Its very existence need be known only to priests, Guild members, and others who might have occasion to refer subjects. It would function under the auspices of, but not under the immediate and direct control of, the Guild of St. Luke and its officers.

"Casement" is therefore proposed not as a sole answer to the problem of the relevance of the Guild in 1967, but as a type-project that would increase member-participation in an area of special competence and concern and that would constitute a *service* of peculiarly Christian dimensions for persons who have heretofore been viewed with a certain degree of distaste.

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