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San Francisco Guild

Moderator's Message

VERY REVEREND MONSIGNOR TIMOTHY E. O'BRIEN

In the Archdiocese of San Francisco we are proud of our health apostolate program. The cornerstone is the leadership of dedicated religious and lay Christians. Our Catholic Physicians' Guild, young in years, is mature in its leadership. The future of the Church in this city of St. Francis depends on the formation of courageous leaders of faith. Through the viable Guild the doctor can learn and experience the love of a Christ centered community. Physicians learned in the doctrines of the Vatican II Council and dedicated to sharing their love give to the People of God the courage to face the challenge of renewal with Christian joy and optimism.

The Church in the health field stands at a crossroad. For the past 200 years the religious have been the visible witness of the Church's concern for suffering mankind. The leadership of the Sisters has produced 850 hospitals. The courage of the Jesuits has produced four medical schools. Today, Vatican II asks the layman to assume the leadership. The decline of vocations leaves to the layman the responsibility of witness in the health field. The spirit of religious renewal encourages the Sister to relinquish administrative positions and seek roles of direct service. The future of the Church's participation in the health field depends upon the layman and, especially, the doctor.

Some say the Church's witness in the health field has reached its zenith. I do not believe this. Greater leadership, rarer courage and deeper sacrifice will be asked of the Catholic doctor. He will respond. Today's witness is the result of the religious' dedication. Tomorrow's witness will flower in the self-sacrificing dedication of the Catholic doctor. The witness of Christ's love for the sick as expressed through the Church's organized programs is now being turned over to the Catholic layman and doctor. Laymen are being placed on corporate boards of Catholic hospitals. Laymen are being appointed administrators. Sisters are being trained in theology to meet the religious needs of patients. We are in a time of change. Some are questioning the future identity of the Catholic Health Facility in this change. I believe the important bridge in this change is the Catholic doctor. The leadership of the Catholic doctor will enable the Church to change from a leadership rooted in the dedicated religious to a dynamic leadership vested in the total people of God. Today, the challenge of the future rests with the doctor. You are the bridge, the needed link.

In San Francisco, the city that knows how, I believe our Catholic doctors will give the self-sacrificing leadership needed to bridge the gap.