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Catholic Physicians' Guild

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—The Story of F.I.A.M.C.—

International Federation of Catholic Medical Associations

What is F.I.A.M.C.?

F.I.A.M.C. is the International Federation of Catholic Medical Associations. The letters F.I.A.M.C. are taken from the French name of the organization—"FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DES ASSOCIATIONS MEDICALES CATHOLIQUES". French has been designated its official language. F.I.A.M.C. is made up of National Catholic Physicians' Associations from all over the world. It is divided into six regions.

- Region I - Africa
- Region II - Asia
- Region III - Australia and New Zealand
- Region IV - Europe
- Region V - North America
- Region VI - Latin America

What is the History of F.I.A.M.C.?

As in all human institutions whose aims are to assemble and to unite, the way towards unification was a very long and tedious one.

The first association of Catholic physicians was founded in France in 1884 during the Pontificate of Pope Leo XIII. This was an era of strong anti-Catholicism in France, Germany and England. Other countries saw the formation of Catholic Physicians' Associations in the following years but their activities were confined only to a local level.

The first attempt to coordinate these local guilds on an international level was the formation of an International Secretariat of National Societies of Catholic Physicians, founded in Paris in 1924. This Secretariat kept up a regular correspondence with the existing groups and also helped in the formation of other groups. It also organized meetings of Catholic physician groups of European countries. This became the beginning of the International Congresses, the first of which was held in Brussels in 1935.

During the Fourth Congress, in Rome in 1949, a second secretariat was founded in Rome. It was independent of the one in Paris.

In 1951, during the Fifth International Congress held in Paris, a new International Secretariat was temporarily formed, combining the two

previously existing secretariats. Its mission was to establish a genuine International Federation of Catholic Medical Associations. International congresses were held in Dublin in 1954, in the Hague in 1956, in Brussels in 1958, in Munich in 1960 and in London in 1962.

At the time of the 11th Congress, held in Manila in 1966, the official statutes and bylaws of F.I.A.M.C. were adopted by the general assembly and approved by the Holy See. This was the legal and statutory birth of F.I.A.M.C. Since that time, other national associations from Australia, New Zealand, Africa and Latin America have become members, so that at present, F.I.A.M.C. has representation from all its six regions comprising all the continents of the world. F.I.A.M.C. then is truly a worldwide organization, and has recently established a permanent secretariat in Rome.

Why is F.I.A.M.C. Needed?

The question of why is a Catholic Physicians' Guild needed has been asked many times, both on a national and an international level. Our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, answered this question very nicely when he addressed F.I.A.M.C. at the 15th International Congress in Rome on Oct. 3, 1982. In discussing the "urgent problem of providing for the safeguarding, the defense and the promotion of human life through the filter of the various cultures", Christ's Vicar on Earth said, "In order to do this, individual action is not sufficient. Collective, intelligent, well-planned, constant and generous work is required, and not only within the individual countries, but also on an *international scale*. Coordination on a *world wide* level would, in fact, allow a better proclamation and a more effective defense of your faith, of your culture, of your Christian commitment in scientific research and in your profession".

What better reason is needed?

What are the Aims of F.I.A.M.C.?

The aims of F.I.A.M.C. are listed in its official statutes and are as follows:

1) To coordinate the efforts of Catholic Medical Associations in the study and spread of Christian principles throughout the world.

2) To encourage the development of Catholic Medical Associations in all countries in order to assist the Catholic physician in his moral and spiritual development as well as in his technical advancement.

3) To take part in the general development of the medical profession and to promote health and social work in accordance with the Magisterium of the Catholic Church.

4) To establish a counseling service for the study of medico-moral problems and their practical and theoretical solution.

How Does F.I.A.M.C. Attempt to Achieve These Aims?

1) F.I.A.M.C. organizes a World Congress which is held every four years in different areas of the world. These Congresses are held during the meeting of the General Assembly of F.I.A.M.C. The first World Congress was held in Brussels in 1935. At these Congresses, papers are presented and discussed to keep Catholic physicians current on medico-moral problems and their solutions within the teachings of the Divine Physician. For example, in 1966 the 11th International Congress held in Manila discussed the Catholic physician and the problem of world population. In 1970 the 12th Congress, which was held in Washington, D.C., discussed the Catholic physician and the conservation of life. In 1974 the 13th Congress, held in Barcelona, discussed the freedom of the children of God. In 1978, the quality of life in a changing society was studied in Bombay. In the 1982 Congress, held in Rome, the theme was the physician in the service of life. The speakers at these meetings are usually international experts in their field. Mother Teresa, the Nobel Prize winner, addressed the Bombay Congress in 1978. Our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, honored the Rome Congress in 1982 by addressing those present.

2) Regional Congresses are held in the different regions of F.I.A.M.C. These meetings are held two years after each World Congress. Here again, these meetings are intended to assist the physician in joining his faith with the practice of medicine.

3) F.I.A.M.C. periodically publishes a bulletin which is used as a source of news of what is going on in the various regions. Usually included is a message from the ecclesiastical advisor and F.I.A.M.C.'s president. These bulletins are used to circulate the proceedings of the various regional or local national meetings. It is hoped that this will stimulate subjects for future world congresses.

4) F.I.A.M.C. has established a Bio-Medical Ethics Center in Bombay to study medico-moral problems which arise as the result of the rapid advances in medical technology. The Center will also have an information service and circulate statements on matters of health from the Holy See. The hope is that other Bio-Medical Ethics Centers will be established in the other continents for the French, Spanish and German-speaking people of the world.

For further information please write to:

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