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An Ignatian Heritage

JAMES F. GILROY, S.J.

With the year beginning July 31, 1955, the fourth centenary of the death of St. Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Society of Jesus, is being observed throughout the world. It is only fitting that we add a word of tribute and express gratitude to this great Saint and those of his followers in the Society whose work is directed to the medical field. Mr. Gilroy who prepared the data that follows is in studies for the priesthood at St. Stanislaus Seminary, Florissant, Missouri.

ONE DAY in March 1522, a short, shabbily dressed traveller sought refuge in the Hospital of St. Lucy in Manresa, Spain. To all appearances he was just another beggar, one of many for whom the hospital often provided shelter. But as the days of his stay in Manresa grew into weeks and months, it became evident to all that this man, one Ignatius of Loyola, was no ordinary beggar. He attended the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass daily, received Holy Communion weekly, and attended most of the other church services. Long hours he spent apart by himself in prayer. The remainder of his day he devoted to the service of the sick and poor of the hospital, washing and bandaging their wounds, preferably the most loathsome, and carrying from place to place in his arms, those unable to move. For ten months this was his life.

Fifteen years later, in 1537, this same man appeared in Venice, now at the head of a small band of pilgrims bound for the Holy Land. While awaiting passage to Jerusalem, he and his companions

found living quarters in hospitals, among them the Hospital for Incurables. There they spent their days and energy. "Rodriguez [one of the group] gives the programme of their daily and nightly work at the hospitals: 'To tend the patients, make the beds, sweep the floors, scrub the dirt, wash the pots, dig the graves, carry the coffins, read the services and bury the dead.'"¹ These were the men who under the leadership and guidance of St. Ignatius formed, a short time later, the Society of Jesus.

Nor were these the only associations of St. Ignatius with the medical world. He also lodged and labored in other hospitals, such as the Hospital of Antezana at Alcalá, and the Hospital of St. Jacques in Paris, while pursuing his studies at the universities of those cities. Later "he also served in an administrative capacity for several hospitals and until his death was associated in a more than transient way with no fewer

¹ James Broderick, S. J., *The Origin of the Jesuits*. Longmans Green and Co.: London, 1940, p. 54.

than ten or twelve institutions."²

It is from its very beginning, therefore, that the Society of Jesus developed and has maintained a vital interest in the medical apostolate. This interest has been transformed into action in various ways. Wherever circumstances permit, the Jesuit novice undergoes a hospital probation of about one month's duration, during which time he lives and works in a hospital, performing tasks not unlike those St. Ignatius performed. In later life many a Jesuit missionary in India, Africa, Alaska, or one of the many other mission lands has been the only source of medical care for the sick and dying. Others have made valuable, detailed reports on the conditions of various diseases and tropical fevers. Not a few, in fact hundreds, have died "martyrs of charity" while caring for the plague-stricken.

The American Assistancy of the Society of Jesus has successfully carried on this praiseworthy tradition. Well over a thousand members of the Assistancy are toiling in mission fields where medical care is scarce. Father F. M. Menager, S.J., writes from Alaska: "The doctor here is yours truly. Ever since I came to Alaska twenty-five years ago, I have practiced medicine among the Eskimoes since there was nobody else to do it."³ Besides rendering this personal service where necessary, most of the mission stations provide in

² Alphonse M. Schwitalla, S.J. Article, "The Medical Apostolate of the American Assistancy," from *Woodstock Letters*, vol. LXXXIII, No. 3, July, 1954, p. 227.

³ *Ibid.* p. 280.

some way for the medical care of those under their charge. For instance, in residencies in the Indian missions here in America "wherever . . . there is a school [in sixty-one localities] there is also provision for a satisfactory dental infirmary for the children, and, generally, a more or less adequate school health program. In several stations the mission school is a sort of medical center for the general population of the locality."⁴ Ten medical clinics are supervised by Jesuit missionaries in the Philippine Islands. Through these and similar works the American Assistancy contributes a large part to the over-all picture of the Society's mission endeavors which shows Jesuits throughout the world laboring in some capacity in three hundred and fifty hospitals and sixteen leprosariums, in which more than ten thousand lepers receive care.

Another, and perhaps the most impressive, phase of Jesuit activity in the field of medicine in America is in the educational sphere. Of the six Catholic schools of medicine in the United States, five are maintained by Jesuit universities. One is located in the East, at Georgetown University, and the other four in the Midwest: at Marquette University, Loyola University in Chicago, Creighton University, and St. Louis University. In comparison with other medical schools, they are large; enrollments range from three to five hundred students.

Maintaining these schools has

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 277.

been a great financial burden on the universities, as the tuition of the medical student is far short of the cost of his education. It has been only with great sacrifice that these schools of medicine have been retained. But realizing the tremendous importance of educating Catholic physicians in "sound moral, ethical and religious principles,"⁵ the universities have gladly made the necessary sacrifices. They have done their utmost to imbue their students with these essential principles, maintaining at the same time a high standard of excellence in the professional training they provide. That this latter is true is clearly evidenced by the fact that all are flourishing despite the proximity of secular universities possessing high-ranking medical schools of their own.

Through these schools the Society of Jesus is making a sizable contribution not only to the advancement of the medical profession in the United States, but especially to the development of our Catholic life and culture. It should be noted, however, that much of this success must be attributed to the volunteer teachers who "make literally enormous sacrifices in keeping up a teaching program in addition to a very exacting medical practice. Jesuit medical schools owe an unrepayable debt of gratitude to the volunteer teacher in the medical profession."⁶

Jesuit institutions also maintain seven schools of dentistry and

three schools of pharmacy. Thirteen colleges and universities are engaged in some way in nursing education. Programs in medical social work are offered in four universities.

Not only to the missionary and educational fields, however, is the American Jesuits' medical apostolate restricted. In many institutions, both Catholic and non-Catholic, in the missions and at home, they serve as chaplains. Father Charles B. Moulinier, S.J. was instrumental in forming The Catholic Hospital Association and served as its president for a number of years. He was succeeded in office by Father Alphonse M. Schwitalla, S.J. The late Father Patrick J. Mahan, S.J. was active for many years in this Association, from its earliest days, and was at one time a vice-president. The Catholic Medical Mission Board was founded by Father Edward F. Garesche, S.J. Its object, to supply medical aid to missions throughout the world, is being accomplished with wonderful success. Father Garesche at one time editor of *Hospital Progress* the official journal of The Catholic Hospital Association, now edits the *Medical Mission News*. Father Gerald Kelly, S.J. has written extensively on medico-moral problems. His articles in *Hospital Progress* and *THE LINACRE QUARTERLY* have been published in pamphlet form under the title "Medico-Moral Problems." Associated with him in this medico-moral field are Father John C. Ford, S.J. and Father John J. Lynch, S.J. Father Ignatius Cox, S.J. founded The Federation of

Catholic Physicians' Guilds and served as moderator for many years. He was succeeded by Father Alphonse M. Schwitalla, S.J. who directed its activities for a long period. Besides editing *Hospital Progress* and *THE LINACRE QUARTERLY*, Father John J. Flanagan, S.J. is executive director of The Catholic Hospital Association. Since its inception forty-one years ago, the organization has expanded greatly and now enjoys a position of considerable influence in United States and Canadian hospital circles.

In Canada Jesuits are making contributions to the hospital field. Father Hector Bertrand, S.J. was for several years the president of The Canadian Hospital Association. He is now president of Le Comité des Hôpitaux du Québec and editor of the journal, *Hôpital d'aujourd'hui*. Father Jules Paquin,

S.J. writes extensively on medical ethics. Father J. I. D'Orsonnens, S.J. has been director of hospitals in the archdiocese of Montreal for many years.

These are, in general, the main activities in the medical apostolate of the Society of Jesus in America. In this great variety of action there is a fundamental principle of unity. Four hundred years ago in Manresa it was a poor beggar's deep love of God manifested by a selfless devotion to His sick and suffering children; today it is the same love of God manifested in a vast network of missions, schools, organizations, and publications. It is another clear indication that, as we celebrate in this Ignatian Year the fourth centenary of his death, the spirit of St. Ignatius is still very much alive in the Society he founded.



⁵ *Creighton University Bulletin School of Medicine*, 1951-52, p. 47

⁶ Schwitalla, *op. cit.*, p. 243