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In the Memory of Man ... 25 Years with The Federation of Catholic Physicians' Guilds

Catholic Physicians' Guilds

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Twenty-five Years of Catholic Action

THE PERIOD through which the Catholic Church in America has been passing may well be called the Catholic Action era. It is one which has witnessed the development of many organizations of Catholic lay men and women. These have played an important part in the growth and understanding of the Church in America. It was only natural and logical that Catholic physicians should become a part of this great movement.

On the occasion of the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of The Federation of Catholic Physicians' Guilds, it is a pleasure to review the status of Catholic Physicians' Guilds. Like so many good movements, the number of Guilds grew slowly and the Federation had its years of discouragement. It is quite evident, however, that the founders of the Guilds and the Federation had sound ideas and planned wisely.

When the Federation was established in 1932, there were only seven Guilds. Today there are sixty, scattered across the country from Vancouver to New York and from Minnesota to Puerto Rico. Guild members now number 4,300. Membership in individual Guilds ranges from twelve to six hundred. More than 1,000 physicians who do not belong to Guilds subscribe to THE LINACRE QUARTERLY, the Federation's official journal.

It is interesting to note that subscriptions to THE LINACRE QUARTERLY now total 8,500. This means that the Federation is now extending its influence beyond the ranks of Guild members; its journal goes to many seminaries, to hundreds of priests, to many Catholic hospitals and libraries, and to hundreds of individual Catholic physicians, many of whom are practicing in small towns and rural areas.

It is a pleasure to be able to congratulate Father Cox, Father Schvitalta, and Monsignor McGowan who as Moderators have led the Federation to this enviable position. We can never forget the work of the late Dr. Richard A. Rendich whose inspiration it was to organize Catholic Physicians' Guilds and ultimately the Federation, the late Dr. Joseph Dillon, and his wife, who now lives in New York City. Neither can we forget the work and devotion of scores of other Catholic physicians who faithfully supported the Federation through its years of struggle. We now enjoy the fruits of their labors.

John J. Flanagan, S.J.
Editor, THE LINACRE QUARTERLY

In the Memory of Man...

HISTORY is a most effective factor in shaping the present. A quarter of a century may not seem a large segment when dates and events are arrayed in sequence of time. But oftimes antiquity in name is last to be sought and vitality of purpose is the renewing spirit to keep fast hold on the present. Thus may we speak of The Federation of Catholic Physicians' Guilds.

The organization, in a manner of speaking, emerged from the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. It was in 1927 that the late Dr. Richard A. Rendich, a prominent roentgenologist, made plans for the first retreat of Brooklyn physicians. The credit is his for the arrangement of this retreat held at Mount Manresa Retreat House, out of which emerged the Guild movement. At an organization meeting Dr. Rendich was elected president. The "retreat group" rapidly changed into "The Guild." The transformation was a fundamental one. In reality, it was simply carrying over into the daily life of the physician, into his professional interests and attitudes and his philosophy of life, the thinking, the inspiration, and determination on the retreat meditation of the Kingdom of Christ.

Brooklyn led the way. In the next few years the spirit caught on; other groups in the area were formed, as well as in Boston and the middle-west. By 1932 those dreaming of an organization of Catholic physicians who might put their scientific and professional standing solidly behind the defense and advocacy of Catholic moral and religious teaching united to found a national organization called The Federation of Catholic Physicians' Guilds. The number of groups has fluctuated through the years; the depression years and World War II took toll on promotion. But it survived.

Almost simultaneously with the foundation of the Federation, THE LINACRE QUARTERLY came into being as its official organ, under the inspiration of and splendid editing by Dr. Anthony Bassler of New York. Its name is symbolic of the aims of the Federation and was chosen by Dr. James J. Walsh whose erudite contributions to the journal in those early years lent high character to the publication.

Thomas Linacre was the physician to Henry the Eighth. He founded the Royal College of Physicians and through it regulated the practice of medicine in England. He was looked upon as one of the great scholars of his day. Having become a priest in his later life, he united in himself the ideals of classical scholarship, scientific medicine, and practical Catholicism.

For a decade and a half, the Federation was under the able
Father Schwitalla, Mr. Knell, and staff members of The Catholic Hospital Association carried on the business functions of the Federation and published LINACRE QUARTERLY until April 1948. At that time for reasons of health Father Schwitalla was forced to resign his duties and the work of the Moderator was transferred to Father Donald A. McGowan, Director of Health and Hospitals, National Catholic Welfare Conference, Washington, D. C. Father John J. Planagan, S. J., who succeeded Father Schwitalla as Executive Director of The Catholic Hospital Association, became Acting Editor of THE LINACRE QUARTERLY.

The central office for the Federation remained at 1438 South Grand Boulevard in St. Louis, and now concerted effort could be exerted to promote formation of more Guilds. From eleven in 1948 the total has grown in 1957 to sixty; the geographical span is from Vancouver, British Columbia to New York and from Minnesota to Puerto Rico. More than 4,300 Catholic physicians and a small number of dentists and pharmacists are members. The central office sends out organizational assistance in the promotion of Guilds. Inquiries come from readers of LINACRE QUARTERLY and from recommendation of members of existing Guilds.

To strengthen the national organization, the Executive Board meeting comprised of the officers of the Federation and one representative from each constituent Guild, had convened in conjunction with the annual American Medical Association convention. It was soon evident, with the growth in number of Guilds, that brevity of time precluded the transaction of business during those sessions and for the past five years a second meeting of the Board has been held in the winter to afford more opportunity for discussion of an ever enlarging agenda. THE LINACRE QUARTERLY reports the deliberations of these meetings.

With spiritual motivation the keynote of all activities, the Federation sponsors the observance of the “White Mass” to honor St. Luke, Patron of Physicians, on his Feast Day, October 18. The Guilds arrange for the Mass in hospital chapels, parish churches, Cathedrals, and even, last year, at the Tokyo International Airport chapel, Japan.

Besides the Executive Board meeting held during the A.M.A. sessions, the Federation is now among the many exhibitors who engage booths for the convention. The impact of such a project can exercise a positive influence on this powerful group of professional men. For the first time in 1956, members of various Guilds were on hand at the Chicago sessions to talk with visitors regarding medicomoral problems in the light of Catholic teaching. Literature was distributed along with copies of THE LINACRE QUARTERLY. Non-Catholic physicians in the booths were attracted to the booths; much interest was evinced on the part of Catholic medical men in May, 1957.
the activities of Guilds and the Federation. This is to be a continuing project.

Reports of activities of the constituent Guilds are mailed to the central office and are a matter of record. This is a point of discussion on the agenda of the Federation Board meetings. Projects vary with locality. Autonomy is reserved to the individual groups, making for a flexible functioning. Always, the purpose is to bring spiritual counsel and moral guidance to the physician member so that he may be a more deeply religious man and a better Catholic in his daily practice of medicine.

In such a writing as this, only the national aspect can be discussed. It is for each Guild to examine its own record and to see wherein it has contributed to the general welfare.

The Linaere Quarterly, of course, provides the lasting memorial of its parent, the Federation of Catholic Physicians' Guilds. Its pages have revealed the needs of the times when medicine should have become a useful ally to those causes needing a valiant champion, in those early days when the Catholic Church alone had the coordinated body of moral and religious truths capable of saving the science of medicine from an abuse of science. Father Cox, Dr. Hassler and Dr. Dillon in their great wisdom worked assiduously to publish material to keep their subscribers informed of Catholic principles as applied to the needs of their times. Without their solicitude and the inspiration of Dr. Rendich who has the admiration and respect of all for his magnificent vision that established the Brooklyn Guild and paved the way for the Federation, there would be no occasion for this present writing.

Rather than have history repeat itself, it is the feeling at this quarter-century mark, that the Divine Physician is a vigorous motive for the Catholic medical man of today to pursue his Christ-like work of mercy and of professional competence, idealism, and self-forgetfulness. Christ could never have identified himself with medical economics or medical politics or medico-legal legislation; for Christ, the work of the physician has been first and foremost, a personal, competent service to the sick. And with the foundation well laid for the Catholic Physicians' Guild movement, another twenty-five years can well record a meeting of the challenges Catholic men in medicine have met in the light of their religious convictions.

— J. R.

Federation Executive Board Meeting Scheduled

The Executive Board of the Federation of Catholic Physicians' Guilds will meet June 4, 1957, 8:00 p.m. at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, New York City.

The Officers of the Federation and one delegate from each active constituent Guild constituting the Board will conduct business.

Election of Officers will take place.

This meeting is usually scheduled for Wednesday morning during the A.M.A. convention. This year that time will be for the Federation Jubilee Mass, 9:00 a.m., at St. Patrick's Cathedral.

The Dinner at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel to observe the 25th Anniversary, supplants the luncheon meeting usually sponsored by the Federation. All Catholic physicians, their wives, and friends are cordially invited to attend. Reservations, $15.00 per person; includes reception, dinner, dancing, and gratuities.