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Looking Forward: with Father Ignatius Cox, S.J., Moderator of the Federation, 1932-1945

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with Father Ignatius Cox, S.J.,
Moderator of the Federation
1932-1945

Greetings to the Federation of Catholic Physicians' Guilds on its Silver Jubilee.

My memory goes back to 1932 when we formed the Federation. At its origin, there were at most six or seven Guilds. Vivid memories are present of how hard it was in the passing years to keep the Federation going and the Linacre Quarterly in existence.

The 50 active Guilds today with their 4,300 members and the 8,500 readers of the Linacre are statistical evidence of the manifest and manifold blessings of God on this great work. Catholic physicians now have a strong national organization and a national voice. These are tremendously important for the part the Catholic Church in America is to play in the days before us.

There was a clear need in the beginning of the Federation. It was to form a powerful barrier of both science and Catholicism against the loose morals and sex liberalism of the day. Those conditions are still with us.

May I suggest a paramount objective for the Federation in the twenty-five years to come. The Federation in the past has grown outwardly. But if it is to realize all its possibilities for God and country in the years which lie ahead, it must parallel its outward growth with an inward growth. This can only mean growth in Christ. Let it be the overall aim of the Federation as it journeys towards its Golden Jubilee to foster and favor activity by the Guilds which will bring about the intensification of the spiritual life of its individual members.

This is not easy. The Catholic physician has a vital place in the Mystical Body of Christ. There is a special sanctity that befits his vocation in the hierarchy of Christian activity. We will start the study of the elements of that specific sanctity here. We are thinking of days of recollection, conducted by a master, on the lines of that specific sanctity. Days of recollection thus conducted, together with the annual retreat, will lead to a knowledge and practice of a Catholic way of life proper and specific for him as a member of the Mystical Body of Christ.

If the individual Guilds under the leadership of the Federation make their paramount purpose the intensification of the spiritual life of their members, there will be no doubt about our achievement for Christ in the Catholic America which is dawning. The celebration of our Golden Jubilee will proclaim and radiate the glory of God.

Greetings from
Alphonse M. Schavitalla, S.J.
Moderator of the Federation — 1945-1948

The two and a half decades which constitute the lifetime of the Federation of Catholic Physicians' Guilds are the apex of the science and art of medicine and of all the sciences and arts ancillary to medicine. Biochemistry and physiology, medical diagnostics, and therapeutics, immunology and epidemiology have all achieved peaks in their development and have risen to levels unexpected and unanticipated even though hoped and longed for. As a result, human interests on a large scale have widened and deepened. Death rates, morbidity rates have decreased; birth rates, life expectancies have almost unbelievably increased. Mortality rates for some diseases have all but reached zero; incidence rates for others have note-worthily decreased. And parallelizing all this, medicine has relearned how to emphasize the dignity of the individual man and his uniqueness.

All this and more of the same kind of triumphs have demanded a deepening of medical responsibility of medical philosophy, ethics, sociology, and medical economics, so that the establishment of such associations as the Federation of Catholic Physicians' Guilds cannot but be regarded as the outgrowth at the very front-rank of medical progress. Father Cox twenty-five years ago, with a deep insight into the mind world of medicine, seized upon the physician's responsibility as the most important of the responses of the individual doctor's cooperation with the general advance, just as so many others seized upon other phases — history, education, economics, and allied viewpoints. He did well. The physician is expected to extend himself, to raise his sights higher, to focus his gaze farther than at any other time in history. It is not casual coincidence that just at this time, during the four years, 1952 to 1955, His Holiness Pope Pius XII pronounced no fewer than 18 allocations to medical groups in audience and no fewer than 19 other allocations to other than medical groups in which there occurred passages emphasizing phases of responsibility closely related to medicine. In the course of these allocations, pronouncements were made on many controversial points and authoritative answers were given to many disputed questions. Numerous as these allocations are, so varied also are they in their themes, ranging from general considerations such as "Moral Values in the Service of the Sick" and "Medical Ethics and Law" to such particularized topics as "Psychological Therapy and Religion" and "Moral and Psychological Problems in Poliomyelitis."

Another great development of the past quarter century is the foundation and formation of the World Health Organization and of the World Medical Organization. The international interests in medicine have reached a scope and an extent, at present, comparable, surely, to those achieved in no other period in the history of medicine. All this and much more that might be mentioned is the area of interest of the Federation of Catholic Physicians' Guilds for it is all embraced in the concepts of "The Philosophy and Ethics of Medicine." The first quarter of a century might well be considered the area of planting; the second of reaping. The Guilds impact on medicine will be intensified and extended. The membership growth during the last five years has been little short of phenomenal. The future holds the promise of greater greatness but also of greater influence.

With congratulations to the officers and members goes the modest prophecy that the second quarter of the century will exceed the first in influence and achievement — for the betterment of mankind, physically and spiritually for the greater professional competence of our members, and all for the greater glory of God.

May, 1957