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What is a Catholic Physicians' Guild?

SCANNING back copies of THE LINACRE QUARTERLY for interesting data to bring to this anniversary issue a full account of the Federation's history, a page from the June 1936 number bears reprinting . . . its application twenty years later attests to the continuing purpose of Catholic Physicians' Guilds.

The occasion was the 21st annual convention of The Catholic Hospital Association held in Baltimore, Maryland. We quote:

Among the hundreds of medical and nursing exhibit booths which covered more than two-thirds of the vast floor of the 5th Regiment Armory in Baltimore was a little booth over which was the simple title: "Federation of Catholic Physicians' Guilds." This booth was under the care of Drs. Joseph A. Dillon and Matthew Golden, who distributed there the literature of the Federation. Many were the names that were registered in the Federation's book and many were the inquiries about the work of the Federation. It would seem proper here to restate the aims and purposes of the various Guilds that have united in a Federation which is countrywide:

EXISTING GUILDS: Active guilds have been functioning for some years in various cities of the United States, the oldest of these in Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Bronx and Rochester; all are affiliated with the Federated Catholic Physicians' Guilds. Other units are in the process of formation. Strong Catholic Physicians' Guilds have been active in England, France, Italy and other countries of Europe for many years. The work of the Guilds has been approved by His Holiness and the Hierarchy of the Church in this country. The Holy

Father has expressed the desire for the spread of this work.

PURPOSE: To promote moral principles in medical education and practice. The various guilds attain these objectives in the manner decided upon by their members. As an example of possible guild activities the following is taken from the Constitution of one of the active guilds:

- (a) To uphold and practice the principles of Catholic faith and morality, as related to the science and practice of medicine, and to condemn un-Christian and unscientific materialism.
- (b) To assist the Church and ecclesiastical authorities in the diffusion of the knowledge of Catholic medical ethics.
- (c) To form an organized resistance to irreligious and materialistic propaganda and legislation.
- (d) To encourage young Catholic men to study medicine and to assist them in college admission.
- (e) To assist Catholic institutions, particularly hospitals and medical missions.
- (f) To sustain Catholic hospitals in their enforcement of ethics and operative restrictions of The Catholic Hospital Association.

METHOD OF ORGANIZATION:

A large and well developed organization is not necessary for guild activities. The primary object of the guild, the promotion of moral principles in medical education, may be attained by a small group.

Guilds have been formed by two methods:

- (a) By the Ordinary of the Diocese through the appointment of a spiritual director or physician to organize.
- (b) Through the initiative of one or more physicians who have assembled a small group for the forma-

tion of a chapter and then secured the approbation of the Ordinary of the Diocese.

In either event the physicians interested have appointed several of the group to serve as a membership committee. Experience has taught that personal contact is necessary to increase membership. A membership committee may be formed of two or three men from each hospital staff or medical society in the community. A small number of enthusiastic workers making personal contacts among their fellow physicians explaining the objects of the guild will produce the desired results.

ACTIVITIES: The most popular activity seems to be the evening meetings for the discussion of an ethical question pertaining to medicine. As a rule a speaker is invited to discuss a subject of medico-moral interest; a general discussion follows. Other activities immediately suggest themselves as soon as the organization has been completed. These vary depending upon the needs of the community in which the guild is situated. The following examples

are worthy of note: cooperation with the St. Vincent de Paul Society in the care of the sick poor; establishment of dispensaries in connection with the Diocesan Bureau of Charities; the formation of student guilds in medical schools; the publication of literature on subjects of medico-moral nature.

The guilds without exception have felt the need of at least one spiritual function during the year, usually in the form of corporate communion, evening or week-end retreats, etc.

The number of activities of the constituent Guilds has increased but the motivation has not changed. The 60 member groups comprise some 4,300 Catholic physicians, with a small percentage of dentists and pharmacists. A notable function sponsored by the Federation is the observance of the "White Mass" to honor St. Luke, Patron of Physicians, on his Feast Day, October 18.

