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What Manner of Man*

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THE Catholic Physician of The Year Award was established by the National Federation of Catholic Physicians' Guilds in 1957. Since then the Award has been conferred annually, according to recognition and honor to a Catholic physician judged praiseworthy in medical, spiritual, and personal life.

The 1960 nominations comprised seven candidates, each an exemplary physician. Early last October one of these nominees was selected by the Award Committee. Later, on October 24, 1960, I, as Chairman of the Committee, wrote Dr. E. J. Murphy, President of the Federation, informing him of the recipient chosen for 1960.

I should now like, mindful of the privilege associated with the honor of making this announcement, to name as Catholic Physician of The Year, Dr. Leslie D. Cassidy. But I must respectfully inform you that on October 24, 1960, however providential this date might seem to be, Dr. Cassidy, after an arduous illness of half a decade, died in his sixty-fourth year.

* Eulogy naming The Catholic Physician of The Year, 1960; December 3, 1960, Executive Board, National Federation of Catholic Physicians' Guilds, Mayflower Hotel, Washington, D. C.

Dr. Cassidy was a native of Macon, Georgia. He graduated in medicine from St. Louis University School of Medicine in 1920; and for nearly forty years engaged in the private practice of internal medicine and gastroenterology in St. Louis.

As a physician he was competent: he attained membership in Alpha Omega Alpha undergraduate honorary medical society and American College of Physicians. At varied times he held important positions: Chief of Medicine of 70th General Hospital serving in Italy and Africa during World War II; President of Hospital Staff and Chief of Medical Service of St. Vincent de Paul Hospital in St. Louis; and Assistant Clinical Professor of Medicine at St. Louis University School of Medicine.

As an apostle in Christian action he was fervent: Lay Affiliate of the Congregation of The Missions of St. Vincent de Paul; continual provider of medical care for religious and of financial aid to Catholic activities. He promoted for physicians the spiritual exercises and benefits of closed retreats. In addition, he founded the Catholic Physicians' Guild of St. Louis. As president, he nur-

tured its early growth; later, as perennial secretary, he personally guided its development. In 1955, he was elected treasurer of The National Federation of Catholic Physicians' Guilds.

However inadequate my portrayal of Dr. Cassidy, I should like not to cite his achievements in medicine; nor his accomplishments as impartial counselor to various professional organizations; nor even his usefulness as mentor in undergraduate medical education. Instead, I should like briefly to dwell on what manner of man he was.

His chosen role was that of the Samaritan: his patients were anyone in need. His selected manner was that of St. Vincent de Paul: the thrusting aside of all personal desire for distinction.

He was intimately known in the hearts of countless human beings; yet his name is not a common byword over the nation. He showed unwearied concern for superior good of human life; yet his name is not an epithet in the vocabulary of medical scientists.

Kind, understanding, serene, charitable, humorous, wise — all these he was. And if I were required to make a choice, I should choose his charity. I choose charity because it, like love of man and boundless respect of healing value of human understanding, is not something optional. It is the very essence of Christian faith; it makes sense only in light of that faith.

Dr. Cassidy lived in a time of

danger: a period characterized by revival of the cult of the extraordinary common man; a time of excessive preoccupation — perhaps partly insensible — with corporate security and obligations, as well as with mediocrity.

Dr. Cassidy was not such a man. Quite the opposite was true. First he was spiritually dedicated. Second, he dared to stand above contending forces of the common man that reject nonmaterial values and idealistic aims. Third, he wholeheartedly believed in man's individual development, that man develops harmoniously in God's grace through exercise of personal responsibility. Fourth, he dared to obey impulses of spiritual love. Consequently he fashioned a personal and professional life devoted to the goodness and soundness of Christian charity. He was mindful of problems besetting the poor: that the poor often are least resourceful among men, and that their need, however varied, tends to be greatest. Here again, Dr. Cassidy believed — and not merely in a 'do-gooder' sense — that what was done for the less fortunate would be a real measure of the mind and soul of man. Thus, he was not an extraordinary common man; he was an ordinary uncommon man.

Today, among medical circles, some of us assume — wittingly or unwittingly — that our manner and methods in medical care of the poor are nearly perfect. And, too, some of us — but perhaps in the limitations of our awareness — tend to show hardly no enthusiasm

in a critical inquiry of the poor. Despite that, Dr. Cassidy attended the very poor. Whether daily in his own private medical practice, or weekly in medical clinics of private and municipal hospitals of St. Louis, as well as the city jail, his services enriched both personal and physical lives of the poor. Not merely personal charity, but also humbleness characterized his medical and social interests. Thus his intellect and soul, in transcending material interests and personal achievement, obeyed the law of love and charity. "After all," he once said, "it is a small effort. We all could do more of this charitable work — giving more freely of the talents God has given us."

Conspicuously prominent in Dr. Cassidy's ventures to serve humanity was the formation of a medical care program for needy citizens. In 1953 he organized a group of physicians to provide charity medical care for human-beings living in a small, poor mining community fifty miles southwest of St. Louis. Members of the Catholic Physicians' Guild representing four Catholic hospitals in St. Louis provided citizens of Old Mines, Missouri, with medical examinations and care, with preventive immunization of children, as well as with transportation to hospital facilities in St. Louis. The President of the St. Louis County Medical Society described the efforts of Dr. Cassidy's project aptly: "The work

done by these physicians is in the finest tradition of the medical profession." Dr. Cassidy merely expressed a humble view: "We were searching for something we could do with the brains God has given us. The poor people in the Old Mines area seemed to need our help the most."

Dr. Cassidy seemed to move harmoniously in God's grace: he was a daily communicant. He seemed to move in knowledge of spirit and emotion of man: he was a daily attendant to the poor. Thus, his love of God and man.

He leaves not only a legacy of cherished personal memories, but enriched examples of spiritual confidence — all this was known and esteemed in him. Yet, Dr. Cassidy, who preferred to work in humble anonymity, would choose to be retained simply: in hearts and prayers of those nearest him in his three-fold vocation, family — wife, children and grandchildren; patients and associates; Church.

Dr. Robert Hickey — friend and associate of Dr. Cassidy, founding member of the charity medical care program in Old Mines, Missouri, and recent President of the Catholic Physicians' Guild of St. Louis — came to Washington, D. C. to accept for Mrs. Cassidy and family the Physician of The Year Award. The scroll and medallion we present are but meager evidence of the esteem of those who knew the worth of this fine man.