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Kindliness, Like the Forest Tree

Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary

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Kindliness, Like the Forest Tree...

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The Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary in their Oregon Province observed the centenary of their founding in 1959. Mother Mary Mark, Provincial Superior, was asked to address the physicians to whom the Community owes a full measure of gratitude for medical care given to the Sisters during the many years of their labors in the Northwest. Her expression of thanks is recorded here as an echo of the sentiments of others who cherish the solicitude of physicians for those who come to them in need.

As I welcome you gentlemen and your wives to this Centenary dinner, I am doing something most agreeable to me personally; but I am also obeying a mandate — a double mandate.

The first injunction is from the Sisters. Every Sister in the Province was invited to send in suggestions as to how we should celebrate our 100th year, and one of these that received the widest and most enthusiastic endorsement was: "Let's do something to show our appreciation to doctors. They are true friends and the best of benefactors. Maybe they would enjoy coming to dinner."

The second mandate is from Holy Scripture itself. "Hold the physician in honor for the service he has done thee," says, *Ecclesiasticus*. "His knowledge makes the doctor distinguished and of great men he is the honored guest."

I cannot speak for great men, but I can surely vouch for grateful women. We hold you in utmost esteem and you are indeed our honored guests. The Good Book

has much to say in your praise and to all of it we subscribe heartily:

From God the doctor has his wisdom, since from God all healing comes. God makes the earth yield herbs through which the physician cures our pain. Well for us that the secret virtue of such medicines has been revealed, so inexhaustible is God's creation, such health comes of His gift all the world over.

When you so generously make room for us on your crowded appointment list, you may be sure that we prayed first and then dialed your number. That's what the Bible recommends:

When thou fallest sick, delay not, but pray to the Lord. Then give the doctor his place. His task is of divine appointment and thou hast need of him. Doubt not that he too beseeches God that his diagnosis may be correct and his treatment may bring thee ease and remedy.

Whatever has been accomplished by the Sisters of the Holy Names during the past century has been dependent in large measure upon the "ease and remedy" that you and your predecessors have ensured. Thanks to scientific advance, present-day teachers are not plagued as the pioneers were with chills and fever, typhoid, diphtheria and consumption.

Thanks to your skill in modern medicine, they escape many of the ills of our haste-ridden atomic age.

Where there is a cure to be had, you effect it. If no relief is possible, you tell us how to live sensibly with our condition. When death is inevitable we turn to you for whatever help your sympathetic hearts can devise.

A Sister with a roomful of lively youngsters to handle has need of vigorous health, everyone will concede and physical well-being is important for the spiritual life, too. It makes self-control easier and vitalizes the power to deal sweetly, even light-heartedly, with difficult situations.

It would take an electronic brain to figure the number of teaching hours your ministrations have added to our apostolate. You not only keep us on duty during our prime but you lengthen our span of activity, stretching out our years in the classroom and afterward our days of labor in the vineyard even to the eleventh hour.

In this Provincial House tonight there are two nonagenarians, Sister Mary Esdras, 92, and Sister Mary Leonella, almost 91. Both literally owe their lives to you, for both have undergone major surgery within the recent past. Their lives of productive scholarship ended years ago, but they serve in many ways. They keep up on current affairs, visit the sick, read to those whose sight is not keen like our own; they sew, weave, and pray, pray, pray.

Prayer, of course, is a chief duty for us all. If it weren't, how

in the world could we even pretend to heed the Biblical command: "Deny not to a physician his due for the service he has done thee." Silver and gold have we not, so by our prayers we try to pay you. It is true that there are a few contributions on the natural level to record. Our boast is that we have given some of you your early schooling. Perhaps we are teaching your children. It may be that your mothers and grandmothers were our pupils long ago; your wives may be the product of our high schools and colleges. In any case, we imbue our students with reverence for the medical profession and encourage the ablest to aspire to it. And we try to form all our young people into citizens who are a credit to God and country.

Even beyond the portals of eternity our prayers follow "the godly men whose virtues have not been forgotten. All these were glorious in their time, each was illustrious in his day. They are buried in peace, but their name lives on and on." It would be gratifying tonight to mention the many great physicians to whom we have been indebted since 1859. The list would include some names now seldom mentioned, and some emblazoned forever in Oregon history. We can never forget those friends of an earlier day: Dr. Andrew C. Smith, Dr. Mackenzie, Dr. Sommer, the Doctors Mount of Oregon City, Dr. Coghlan, Dr. Joyce; nor those over whose deaths we still grieve: Dr. Gambee, Dr. Fitzgibbon, Dr. Fenton, Dr. Petzel, Dr. Samuel B. Wise.

Every day and several times a day our community prays for its benefactors. Besides, there are the intense personal prayers that each of your patients says for you. To remember you is an obligation of conscience, but still more a privilege of affectionate gratitude.

You may want to know whether we will be good patients from now on. To reassure you, we make a three-fold promise. First, we will follow our diets. Of this the Good Book says, "Govern your appetite so that you allow it not what is bad for you; for not every food is good for everyone."

Second, we will commiserate with you over your night calls. With *Ecclesiasticus* we murmur as

we think of you: "Even when he lies on his bed to rest, his cares at night disturb his sleep. So short is his rest, it seems like none at all."

Third, we shall be docile patients for fear of incriminating ourselves: "He who is a sinner toward his Maker will be defiant toward the doctor."

In all seriousness and with deep gratitude, I must quote one more verse from Holy Scripture: "How green yonder rushes grow by the river's bank! They shall be plucked up before hay-harvest. But kindness, like the forest tree, lasts on, remembered in blessing; charity remains unforgotten."

