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The Moderator's Message ... Some Observations on Growth

Kenneth P. MacKinnon

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President's Page

The officers of the National Federation take this opportunity to thank the members for the high honor they have conferred upon us in our election to guide the affairs of our organization for the coming year. We sincerely promise to devote ourselves to accomplish the high aims first enunciated some 52 years ago.

A brief historical perspective may help to set in focus some of our plans for the future. In 1932, the Brooklyn Guild, under the far-sighted leadership of Drs. D. B. Conn and John Masterson, conceived the idea of a Federation of Catholic Physicians. It survived mainly through the personal devotion and sacrifice of Drs. Conn and Masterson.

On August 3, 1945, an agreement was signed by the Catholic Hospital Association of the United States and Canada with the Federation of Catholic Physicians' Guilds for mutual help to provide spiritual counsel and moral guidance to the physicians that may be a more deeply religious person and in his daily work a better doctor.

In 1957, the Silver Jubilee Dinner at the Waldorf Astoria under the leadership of Dr. Dan Mulvihill and in 1960, the Century Dinner celebrating the 100th Guild to become affiliated with the Federation, were memorable occasions.

Dr. Clem Cunningham has just completed an outstanding term as President. The Federation has adopted a new Constitution modified with a view to establishing local and national programs. The country has been divided into eight regional areas to facilitate communication and concerted action among geographically neighboring Guilds.

We co-sponsored with the Family Life Leadership of N.C.W.C., the International Symposium on Birth Control, Washington, D.C., October 20, 21 and 22conferences in Medical Education and Research in Catholic hospitals and with the National Catholic Welfare Conference, will be the first such delegation already has been very helpful in keeping us aware of programs of national concern to all physicians.

The initial purposes of the Catholic Physicians' Guilds were directed at increasing the Catholic physician's personal sanctity and scientific excellence in the daily duties of his medical life. In our generation, we must be concerned with an awareness of our moral, social, and medical obligations to our fellow Americans, indeed to the entire world. No longer can we see ourselves as individual doctors working for our limited personal goals but rather as a potent organization that must play its role in the programs for the health and well-being of all people.

Supporting the Quarterly can and does publicize our many projects and committees. Under dynamic editorial leadership, we have experienced a resurgence of enthusiasm and commitment that will surely grow. But it is only by the time-consuming and ponderous personal efforts of our hands and minds and wills that we can accomplish what we write.

The officers and myself sincerely ask your prayers and urgently need your help and active cooperation in the ensuing year to reap this rich harvest—Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam!

GERARD P. J. GRIFFIN, M.D.

LINACRE QUARTERLY

The Moderator's Message...

Some Observations on Growth

Gentlemen think positively in reference to growth viewing it as the healthy, progressive development of an organism. The pathologist and radiologist must fact the fact of growth in a different context as they observe or examine some pathological formation. In either case, there are three valuable elements: life, change, and the doctor.

All, privileged to live at this time, find themselves in the midst of great and distressing changes—changes in society, in the Church, in worship, in medicine, in the concept of the individual and even of life itself. For most men these changes appear... growth; for some they appear as a threat. A threat to what? There is no name in life—there is only growth or decline.

What of the remark of a doctor at a recent meeting: "Our guild doesn't do a big—just gets us together for Mass and Communion twice a year?" Or another: "I saw enough about medico-morals—why should I associate with a group of Catholic doctors?" I can think of no more shocking indictment of either the failure of the Church to communicate or of the individual to understand the true nature of the Christian vocation and the source of its growth. In these enlightened times one has a right to expect deeper spiritual insight from the educated Catholic.

I would like to refer to some remarks made in Worship six years ago by Father Not P. Hurley, S.J.: "Once the Christian mystery is presented in its dramatic impact, the notion of sanctity becomes obvious, not as a voluntaristic or semi-pelagian impulse toward perfection, but as a free, creative response to God's inviting plan of transformation..." He went on to say: "If the American Catholic is plunged into the heart of the mystery, into the central act of worship, the Mass, it will be difficult for him to see how he differs from non-Catholics in a pluralistic society." And Father Hurley later asked the question: "Could it be that we American Catholics have been shouting from the rooftops about the right things, but what we must do is to attach ourselves to the good tidings that are understood, moral excellence?"

I would say that spiritual growth is indicated all around; but please view the community of Catholic physicians not as a moral formation, but as a healthy organism that must either grow or decline. Which do you want it to do—Doctor? Activity will flow from any Guild when its spiritual life is restored, emphasized and understood. This is a fact of life. The existence of the spiritual life cannot preclude the Spirit Who inspires and propels the individual response. The society of a well-ordered code of action, available at all times in the history of the Church, does not supplant the creative responsibility demanded by individual witness. The Christian conscience must be recognized as the gift of God to His People, not as a threat to revealed truth but as a valid instrument for its implementation, and the respected sign of free men. It is a message to the Corinthians of a variety of ministers in the Church—apostles, prophets, teachers, elders, and others. These Christians show forth God's gifts—but they do not merely form a crowd. Each ministry must be itself—each person must be himself or herself. The Church cannot grow properly. Every doctor knows the threat to life by only one type of cell multiplies too rapidly. If, in the changing pattern of life for the Church, and society at large, our hand does not offer the best solution to the new problems awaiting his art, he research and his interest—whether he is a doctor does—not. So the hoped-for voice will be supplanted by the abnormal growth of other influences in society and the Catholic community will be the loser.

Growth in life you will; hide from conscience if you can; deny your committed to the Christian life if you dare; ignore the growing and revitalized Church if you must. Know this, though, by so doing you don't..."