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Today's Catholic Physicians' Guild

RAYMOND B. BAUER, M.D.

We are presently witnessing a re-orienting period in the history of the Catholic Church. Changes in the liturgy are abundant, the spirit of ecumenism has become popular, dialogue between the hierarchy and the laity has reached a new peak, both in personal and literary communication, and the role of the laity has taken on new proportions. With greater participation of the laity, increased responsibilities arise, the chief one being that the laity must examine individual and group efforts closely to see if time is spent prudently, to examine goals, to assess efficiency and to see how efforts are related to the overall efforts of the Church.

Close examination of the present "movement" reveals that it is not really "new." It has all been said by Christ and recorded in Scripture. It is the interpretation, the concern, and the "action" resulting which is new for us. The truth remains that we are all sons of our Father, are all brothers and sisters in Christ, and that we will be judged by the talents we have been given, and as to how we use these talents to help our fellow man, both spiritually and materially.

As physicians, we have an increased responsibility. Although we may wish to contribute our position in life to just hard work and sacrifice, we nevertheless were gifted not only with sufficient intelligence, but also with the opportunity to make

use of it. In other words, God has been good to us, and we have the responsibility to reciprocate.

How does this pertain to the Catholic Physicians' Guild? It means that we have to examine our conscience, to take inventory at the local and national level, to humbly assess our successes, to critically evaluate our failures, and to investigate our environment to see what should be done and what can be done. It simply means to stop at times and ask "why" we exist as a Guild. It means dialogue with the Church authorities as to how we can be of service to them, to ourselves and to our fellow man. It means we should be productive of sound ideas as to how to help the medically indigent, the poverty-stricken, the culturally deprived, the children of broken homes, the "abandoned" inner-city parishes where the percentage of educated parishioners is declining. It means that we should be participating in diocesan, parish, and community activities and organizations. It means we should not draw into our elite "comfortable" group who are immune to the hardships of others.

You might say that all of the above can be done by individuals alone, without participating as a structural Guild. Fortunately, this is partially true, and we are all aware of the many good works carried on by individuals, and are most grateful for them. But the Guild, because of its organization aspects at the local and national level, can

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MAY, 1966

be of tremendous help by shaping a "community" of action, and also by its ability to communicate with each other across the local and national level. Not only is action efficient when performed as a group, if only because of the greater number of persons involved, but action becomes "contagious" if more persons are exposed to an activity and become aware of the action's merits.

One of the justifiable criticisms of a number of the parish organizations is that they have become, in addition to, or instead of, the originally intended "personal sanctity" function, unbalanced towards a "social" get-together, rather than a desired action organization. In other words, they are meeting more for the sake of meeting with little resultant action. Is this happening to the Catholic Physicians' Guild?

The already overcrowded work and medical meeting schedule of physicians probably precludes this from happening, and judging from the limited attendance at the recent local Guild and Federation meetings, the physicians are not meeting just for the sake of meeting; and neither are they meeting for the sake of "personal sanctity." This conclusion is reached from my observation of the limited attendance at Holy Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral during the American Medical Association Meeting in New York City (June, 1965), the limited attendance at the Chicago Federation Meeting (November, 1965), as well as very limited attendance at our Detroit local functions such as St. Luke's White Mass, the Annual Guild Retreat and local Guild board meetings.

What is happening then? Although attendance at scheduled events has been somewhat disappointing, the response to requests for "action" activities, such as medical-moral lectures for young adult and school age groups, performance of pre-camp and pre-school physical examinations, requests to provide medical care for foster children has been very gratifying. In other words, the physician today is nonetheless willing to perform "actions," but is perhaps reluctant to attend scheduled meetings. The amount of time available is essential here. The above mentioned activities blend in more readily with physicians' training and ability, and in accord with the present spirit of personal involvement, and therefore, this approach is worthy of increased encouragement at the local and federation level. If, along with this, a balance of more purely religious functions and meetings of an educational nature can be simultaneously achieved, so much the better.

What are some of the "action" activities to which a Catholic Physicians' Guild can be contributing? From our experience in Detroit, I would like to mention just a few, aware that this is a partial record of a limited experience, and at the same time hoping that other Guilds can share their experiences with us and stimulate further continued actions.

FAMILY LIFE CLINIC

The Family Life Clinic, under the auspices of the Chancery Office, began its studies over a year ago to counsel married couples in family planning. About thirty doctors participate in this program, each spend-

ing about two hours per month. The function of this clinic is presented in detail in this issue by Dr. John Malone and Monsignor Sawher.

PRE-MARRIAGE PROGRAM

A Pre-Marriage Program is being conducted at a number of parishes throughout the area. This consists of lectures given on three successive Sundays; the first by a priest, the second by a married couple, and the third by a physician who speaks on anatomy and physiology pertaining to marriage. About forty physicians participate in this program.

MEDICAL MISSION PROGRAM

It is common knowledge to all of you that the Federation sponsors a medical mission in Guatemala. Although the major participation of members is of a monetary nature, in the past year four physicians from Detroit spent periods of one month working in Guatemala. This is also discussed in further detail elsewhere in this issue by Dr. Joseph Grady.

ARCHDIOCESAN OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM

In conjunction with the war on poverty, the Archdiocese has opened a number of educational centers for pre-schoolers, utilizing the parish school facilities in the inner-city depressed areas. Members of the Guild performed admittance medical examinations on close to two hundred children this past year.

DETROIT DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE

Private summer camp facilities were made available to about one hundred and fifty children of families on Public Welfare in Detroit. Because of limited funds available to cover the expense of this pro-

gram, members of the local Guild performed the necessary pre-camp physical examinations. With the voluntary help of fellow Protestant and Jewish physicians, this function resulted in an ecumenical effort.

PROJECT SCOPE

Through the cooperation of Sacred Heart Seminary, several local parishes and a small number of seminarians who served as camp counselors, short term summer camp facilities were made available to approximately six hundred youngsters from the inner-city area. Members of the Guild performed the pre-camp physical examinations.

HEALTH AND PERSONALITY CLINICS

Taking the cue from the Catholic Nurse's Association who have been performing a similar function with parochial grade school girls, members of the Catholic Physicians' Guild with the cooperation of the Detroit Archdiocesan Council of Catholic Men and the Urban Parish Committee, have arranged an educational program for the parents and children in the inner-city grade schools, concentrating on the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades.

A series of ten weekly meetings are arranged, with talks being given on etiquette, dental care, hygiene, sex education, personality development, as well as on educational and employment opportunities. The physicians have been chiefly concerned with the two sessions on sex, one being given to the parents and children together, and a second being given to the children alone. Ample time is allowed for answering the multiple questions of children in this age group.

It is hoped that this program can be expanded so that high school students will also be included.

CATHOLIC SOCIAL SERVICE OF WAYNE COUNTY

Catholic Social Services of Wayne County is a large private multifunction family service agency which offers family, marital, and personal counseling and planning for unmarried mothers, adoption, foster care for dependent and neglected children. The agency has approximately five hundred and fifty children placed in foster homes, and about one hundred and sixty of these are in homes in five counties surrounding Wayne County, some as far as fifty miles from central Detroit. Through arrangements made by the Detroit Guild, physicians in these outlying areas (not necessarily Catholic physicians) have been able to provide medical care for these children; this obviates transporting these children to central Detroit for routine medical care. Not only is this financially advantageous to the agency, but is certainly more convenient to the foster parents and also provides better care for the foster children.

WEEK-END RETREATS

The current trend in retreats is for increased lay participation in giving the retreat. Instead of the spiritual director giving all of the talks, lay men and women are giving talks. The request for participation of Catholic physicians is steadily increasing. The physician is particularly suited to discuss with retreatants the basic knowledge, merits

and problems pertaining to sex in marriage, population control, morality, and related subjects.

MEDICAL CLINICS

There are several free clinics for the indigent in Detroit which are voluntarily staffed by Catholic physicians in their spare time. These have a tremendous impact morale-wise on a depressed area, aside from the fact that medical care is sorely needed. The most important thing to these people is for them to know that somebody cares for them, that they are not forgotten.

So much for examples. The above just touch the surface of the multiple possibilities for involvement of the Catholic physician. It is obvious that with the spirit of dialogue prevailing today the opportunities are becoming more abundant. The area of human relations is crying for educated personnel to offer a few spare hours to help the oppressed and needy. Catholic Physicians' Guilds do have qualified personnel to offer in any number of areas.

Our past national president, Dr. G. P. J. Griffin, stated in February, 1965, *LINACRE QUARTERLY*: "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 peoples."

In the same issue our Moderator, Reverend Kenneth P. MacKinnon, stated: "If, in the changing pattern of life for the Church, and society at large, the Catholic doctor does not offer the best solution to the new problems awaiting his art, his re-

search and his interest — if he does not grow — his voice will be supplanted by the abnormal growth of other influences in society and the Christian community will be the loser."

The answer to the question as to "why" the Guild exists is obvious. We exist so that we can make our services available to our fellow man,

to our diocese, to our community, for it is only in helping others that we can help ourselves. It is in getting to know our brothers that we begin to know God. It is only by loving others that we can love God. We join together in the Guild so that this work will become even more effective, and in so doing we will also grow spiritually together.

3rd ANNUAL CONFERENCE

National Federation of Catholic Physicians' Guilds

Houston, Texas

December 8-10, 1966

Shamrock Hotel

Sessions will concern

PROBLEMS CONFRONTING

PHYSICIANS, CLERGY and SCIENTISTS

in HUMAN ECOLOGY