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Reverend Alphonse M. Schwitalla, S.J.

Catholic Physicians' Guilds

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EXCERPTS FROM THE DIMENSIONS OF MEDICINE . . .

You do not treat isolated bodies, nor cases, nor numbers. You treat human beings who have human dignity. You treat human beings whose minds and hearts need understanding and love. You are neither mechanics nor veterinarians. You are physicians . . .

What good is an antibiotic if it creates a neurotic? Why use wonder drugs if you must wonder how it affects personality? . . . But do you ever wonder what effect you have on your patients? Are you well-adjusted, or are you too plagued with run-away emotions and crippling complexes? Are you also handicapped by personal and family problems that leave you not only a divided mind, but also a divided heart? . . . Stripped of professional dignity you are as human as all the rest of men. This can be good if an awareness of your weaknesses serves to increase your compassion for others. But if it hinders your serving others in truth and in accordance with your calling, you deserve to hear the challenging words: "Physician, heal thyself!"

Therefore, reconsecrate yourselves to the love of God as you find Him in your neighbor. Listen as He says to you: "I have given you a fine mind, a good heart, and exceptional skill. Give them back to me. Give me your mind that I may know my sick; your heart that I may offer them my love and compassion. Give me your eyes and your ears that I may seek and help them. Give me your hands that, through you, I may make them whole again." (From an Address before the Catholic Physicians’ Guild of Houston at the White Mass honoring St. Luke, at the Sacred Heart Co-Cathedral, Oct. 18, 1964.)

—Warren F. Dicharry, G.M.,
Dean and Registrar, St. Mary’s Seminary, Houston

Reverend Alphonse M. Schwitalla, S.J., president emeritus of the Catholic Hospital Association and dean emeritus of the St. Louis University School of Medicine, died at St. Mary’s Hospital, St. Louis, the evening of May 25. A solemn High Mass was celebrated at the St. Francis Xavier (College) Church, Saturday, May 29, with burial in the cemetery at St. Stanislaus Seminary, Florissant, Mo. Many friends know him to have been a renowned medical educator, tireless administrator and prolific author. Father Schwitalla, to whom death came in his eighty-second year, was a priest who achieved national eminence as a leader and spokesman for the cause of voluntary health and hospital care—a calling he pursued with complete dedication of self. At one time during a long and distinguished period, he served simultaneously as dean of the School of Medicine and the School of Nursing, acting dean of the Graduate School, regent of the School of Dentistry and director of the Department of Biology.

When the fate of the Catholic Physicians’ Guilds and the future of its official journal, THE LINACRE QUARTERLY, stood on precarious ground, it was Father Schwitalla and his staff of The Catholic Hospital Association who provided the guidance and wherewithal for several years to persevere. A debt of gratitude will be his due as long as the National Federation exists.

His accomplishments were many and his motto, “Nothing is finished if something remains to be done,” is still a challenge to all in the health field who—like him—seek eternity through a selfless commitment to suffering humanity. May his spirit rest in peace!

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