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# We Love Our Moderator

JOHN T. SCHMITZ, M.D.

The Milwaukee Guild of the National Federation has been an active chapter with a yearly average of more than 200 members. Quarterly meetings are well attended; 113 were present for our latest one. We convene at 8:00 a.m. Sunday Mass, followed by breakfast, a brief address and adjournment by 10:00 a.m.

The Guild is alive and well because of our moderator, Reverend Francis J. Bisenius. He has been our good friend and advisor since 1955. Father Bisenius, Milwaukee-born, is Professor of Dogmatic and Moral Theology at St. Francis Major Seminary in Milwaukee. (In spite of this imposing title he can out-fish and out-golf most of us.) He received his elementary education in Milwaukee and attended St. Francis Minor Seminary for six years. He then spent three years at the Gregorian University in Rome before the war forced his return to this country. He was ordained after studying three more years at the Catholic University in Washington. Since 1947 he has been Professor at the major seminary. He is also Pro-synodal Judge of the Archdiocesan Marriage Tribunal and a Censor Librorum for magazine articles published here.

Father Bisenius' attributes are best described by relating his activities in our behalf. He has been instrumental in organizing a working health care program for the religious in the area. Several years ago he called together a committee

of the Guild and the Superiors of all the Religious Orders for an organizational meeting. From this session evolved a worthwhile health program. He has celebrated Mass for every Guild meeting since becoming our moderator, celebrating last year's White Mass with nine Catholic hospital chaplains in the area. Father has visited most of the Guild members in their homes. As a Mother's Day project he had booklets printed in which he provided a page for a Spiritual Bouquet for a doctor and his children to present to their mothers on that special occasion. In his concern for us, Father Bisenius has inspired members who are ill in the hospital, led the rosary at vigils for deceased members; he dropped in on the hospital to see my wife and the delivery of our children. He goes fishing in northern Wisconsin with Guild members; he interrupted one of those outings and drove 280 miles back to Milwaukee to hold a rosary vigil for a deceased member. He is seldom adverse to the game of golf. He has heard the confession of a doctor on his deathbed.

In these many ways Father Bisenius is very close to the members of the Milwaukee Catholic Physicians' Guilds — and *this is why we love our Moderator*.

Dr. Schmitz serves the Milwaukee Catholic Physicians' Guilds as secretary-treasurer. He is in private practice of obstetrics in that city. He is Clinical Instructor of Obstetrics, Marquette University School of Medicine.

remove my high school sweetheart's class ring from my finger; studied at home under his guidance through college and medical school and finally had the privilege of teaming with him in practice for a few short years before he "retired" to a Benedictine monastery after the death of my mother.

Of course he has been the greatest influence in my life. I shall cite only one example of his advice, because his whole life has been a sermon. "If ever a grateful patient or relative tearfully wrings your hand in gratitude for saving the life of a loved one," he said, "accept it humbly and graciously, because you will know that you couldn't have done it by yourself and you are going to be blamed for an awful lot of things you couldn't possibly help."

There was also the late Father Anthony Berens, S.J., who taught Apologetics in the College of Liberal Arts and who used to conclude a lecture like this: "Either this is Truth and the only important Truth in the world or it's the greatest hoax that was ever perpetrated!" His contribution was the utter conviction that our God-given faith is wholly compatible with an endless pursuit of rational and scientific knowledge of nature and ourselves and that without that Faith all things are meaningless.

My mother was a convert. She never missed a basketball game when we played and she was always pleased but secretly a little irreverently amused by the universal practice of both teams of little boys kneeling — as separate teams, of

course — to pray for victory before the games. She was puzzled, she said, about how God could decide which team's prayer to answer, but it was her own observation that the team with the tallest center almost always won.

Perhaps I may be forgiven for "reaching" for analogy here. To me, the "tallest center" — the captain of the team praying to God for victory in the game against disease and death, is the physician who anchors his apostolate in his first duty, beginning in service and continuing through every day of his life in practice; the duty to cultivate a full and competent knowledge and skill in the science and art of medicine. He knows that he needs the help of his teammates in consultation. He seeks his captain's help on moral and ethical problems, especially today in the scrimmage of seemingly paradoxically changing concepts still based on changeless moral principles. He knows enough of his natural remedies to know that they will never be completely adequate — that he needs God's help. He knows that if he is incompetent because of culpable inadequacy in his preparation he is guilty of injustice toward his patient and of presumption in asking the Divine Physician to bail him out.

I offer now this view of my apostolate:

*To cure the diseases that afflict men and to alleviate the physical pain and mental suffering that arise from them.*

*To keep a conviction of the nobility of my vocation and the sacredness of my trust;*

*To love all men as brothers of Christ, to be cared for as such;*

*To understand how my science and art can fit in with God's plan for men;*

*To know that when death eventually and inevitably displaces me at the bedside I have not necessarily failed but have simply had to give way to God's call.*

I know that, with God's help, it is not impossible to carry out such

an apostolate in the little world in which I move. One of His heroes, has shown us the way in our own time, in the person of Doctor Tom Dooley, the late physician to the people of Laos and the world. At his funeral the eulogist quoted from a poem by Robert Frost some words Tom Dooley loved and lived:

*The woods are lovely, dark and deep.*

*But I have promises to keep,  
And miles to go before I sleep.*

## XI

### INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS

of

### CATHOLIC DOCTORS

Manila, Philippines

November 2-6, 1966

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#### Principal Theme

### THE DOCTOR and the POPULATION PROBLEM

#### Secondary Themes

Fertility and Sterility \* Population Control

Genetics \* Social Medicine

Food and Nutrition

Socio-Economic Factors

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