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Call to Catholic Action

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The Reverend Ignatius W. Cox, S.J., first moderator of The Federation of Catholic Physicians' Guilds, commemorated the 25th anniversary of the organization's founding, giving the sermon at the pontifical Mass celebrated by His Eminence Francis Cardinal Spellman at St. Patrick's Cathedral on June 5, 1957. With Father Cox's permission, we record his remarks.

Blessed be the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing on high, in Christ. Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish in His sight in Love. (Eph. 1:3-5)

We are here with grateful hearts blessing God, this morning, for the first twenty-five years of Spiritual blessings He has granted us, in the formation and triumphant success of the Federation of Catholic Physicians' Guilds.

The words of my text apply to the past and the future. Standing at this moment in our history, we seek from the past, as it has unrolled itself, the significance of the Federation in God's providence; and we can find in the text the basis upon which, with joy and optimism, we can erect a more compelling apostolate for God and Christ in the future.

Today at this moment in history, I am willing to hazard a guess and a great hope. I think, hesitatingly, that we are witnessing the end of a revolution and an evolution in the mental attitudes of many men toward God which have been decisively fatal for mankind.

Take your thoughts with you for a moment back to the ages of Faith. In those days men and women, passing from adolescence to their tasks in the varied days of life, carried with them in their hearts and minds the faith that had enlightened Europe, the faith enshrined in the Apostles' Creed. As they took their places in law, in medicine, in government, in the higher vocations, or passed to the lower toiler-tasks of the world, they found everywhere—in government, in law, in medicine, in the workers' guilds—the flowering of that same Faith which was in their own hearts and dominated their whole being.

Contrast that picture with the one of today. When a Catholic in the modern world finds in every walk of modern life a contradiction to the living faith of the Apostles' Creed, which is in his heart. How did all this happen? It took centuries, beginning in the 16th, but it can all be summed up in a few brief sentences. In the middle ages when the Church was supreme in a Christian commonwealth, "God was Lord in state and society, in town and school."

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back, recaptured for Christ by the holiness of the laity.

It is my confidence in the laity that brought me in the beginning of this sermon to hazard the guess and the hope that we are witnesses to the dead-end of the revolution and evolution which after three centuries brought about the secularization of every phase of human life.

The first conquest of secularization is the privileged task of the laity. That great modern Saint, Pius X, said: "What is at the present the most necessary is to have in each parish a group of enlightened laymen—virtuous, resolute, and true apostles." A successor of Pius X, Pius XI, declared, "The whole hope of the Church is in lay saints.

And what Pius X and Pius XI declared and hoped for, I venture to say is with us today. There are many straws on the surface of the swiftly moving current of the present day life of the Mystical Church which show the deep flowing action of the Holy Spirit. The growth of secular institutes, the interest of Catholic youth in the orders for men and women: the significance of closed retreats in the lives of Catholic youth. There is a willingness in youth to talk and think about higher planes of the spiritual life. It is a Catholic physician, Dr. Thomas Verner Moore, now a Carthusian monk, who has given us recently his book *The Life of Man with God*, describing the spiritual life as practiced by men and women in the world as well as by secular priests and monks. Above all, we have the turning of men's minds to Christ in the Eucharist and the growing practice of frequent and daily Communion.

I have a great hope that there will be again such a pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit that it will sweep humanity to the living God through Christ as it swept the Gentile world into the arms of Christianity. The sceptic may laugh and some Catholics may doubt and be indifferent, but all things are possible to those who believe. The intelligent Catholic with a dynamic faith, a vibrant hope, an ardent love, giving himself with joy to the action of the Holy Spirit, working according to his vocation in all the varied phases of life in America can make America Catholic and holy. There is only needed the daring joyful will to do so. I am not afraid to more than hope that he will do so.

May the Federation of Catholic Physicians' Guilds catch this vision and use all its influence that each individual Guild will make a paramount effort to sanctify its individual members and from then on the conquest of American Medicine for Christ the King will be assured.

Blessed be the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing on high in Christ. Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish in His sight in Love.

(Eph. 1:3-5)