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A HISTORY OF THE GUILD MOVEMENT

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I want to discuss with you this evening "The Guilds and Medicine," and in particular the Guild of St. Luke, St. Cosmas and St. Damian, which is the present-day guild of Catholic doctors, dentists and pharmacists, and to stress those two guild fundamentals, group discipline and the application of religious principles to specific problems in every-day life. But first to the story of the Guilds.

When the cities began to grow in the later middle ages, groups of merchants and workers banded together into associations called guilds, to advance their particular endeavor. The merchant guilds—somewhat resembling our present-day employers' associations, sought control and regulation of trade, and the craft guilds of independent workers, the forerunner of our trade unions, advanced the status of labor.

Medicine too had its guilds, those of the doctors—the university graduates—and those of the barber-surgeons who learned through apprenticeship in their guilds. The two groups drew closer and closer together as surgery began to be taught in the universities or in new colleges set up by the surgeon guild itself, such as that of St. Come in Paris,

* This talk was given at a recent meeting of the Philadelphia Guild.

founded by the Confraternity of St. Cosmas and St. Damian, later becoming the Academy of Surgery of France.

In England the barber-surgeons improved in education and practice and in the reign of Henry VIII founded the Royal College of Surgeons. Henry's personal physician, Thomas Linacre, an exemplary Catholic doctor, gave the medical practice of the day a house-cleaning, eliminating irregular practitioners, establishing standards of requirements of education, founding the Royal College of Physicians and writing its constitution. Both the above societies survive today.

Medicine was aided by the other guilds, for they hired physicians to care for their sick and occasionally founded hospitals, as, for instance, St. Job's in Hamburg.

All guilds enjoyed in common the fostering approval of the Church. Each had its patron saint who, while on earth, had engaged in the same occupation as those in the guild. St. Luke, St. Cosmas and St. Damian were the patrons of Medicine. The latter two became especially the patrons of the surgeons. "Throughout Europe," writes Leo Zimmerman in an article in the July, 1936, number of the *American Journal of Surgery*, "guilds of barber-surgeons were organized always

under the patronage of Saints Cosmas and Damian. The guilds always maintained this close connection between religion and the daily life. A guild attended Mass on its saint's day and had his image on its banner and constitution. Dr. David Riesman, Philadelphia's scholarly authority, in his book "Medicine in the Middle Ages," describes how the military surgeons of London held their annual dinner and church parade on St. Luke's day and their business meeting on the feast day of Saints Cosmas and Damian.

St. Luke, the evangelist, was a physician of Antioch. Saints Cosmas and Damian were Christian Arabians who practiced in Asia Minor in the third century. These brothers refused to accept any fees for their work, and died martyrs' deaths at Aegea. Buried in Cyrus in northern Syria, the miraculous cures that occurred at their grave drew many pilgrims. The Roman emperor Justinian visited the tomb and, after prayer, was healed of a long-standing illness. He glorified their remains and had a church built in Constantinople to house them. Later relics were borne to Rome and a basilica erected in the Sacred Way. Miracles continued to happen even here. It was but natural that when guilds were formed these saints should be patrons. Man prays that they will join him in his supplication to God for help. And as patrons of the Physicians' Guilds, these saints were honored so that they might in

turn ask God's blessing on the group and its work.

As years went on and changes took place, the guilds also changed in form, becoming corporations or companies (e.g., the twelve London companies) or else gradually died out, the last traces fading in the early nineteenth century.

But the fundamental principles underlying the guilds were so elementally right that when the wave of anti-clericalism began to wane in the late eighteen hundreds, the guilds reappeared. In 1884, in Mans, Dr. Jules Le Belle, surgeon to the City Hospital, started the movement amongst the doctors, writing to the Catholic physicians of France and requesting those interested to form guilds for the study of Catholic principles as applied to their clinical work. Guilds were formed in Paris, Lille, Lyons, etc. and a year or so later, when a general meeting was held, nine hundred and fifty members attended and the movement had spread to most of the other continental countries and even to Brazil. In 1910, under the leadership of S. G. Maunsell, Surgeon-General of the British Army, the British Isles saw the rebirth of the Medical Guild again under the patronage of St. Luke, St. Cosmas and St. Damian. A description of the start in England is contained in a letter to Dr. Edward Mallon of this city, dated April 25th, 1911.

Desire to form such a Guild here in Philadelphia stirred in the minds and hearts of some Catholic

physicians and, after preliminary arrangements, an invitation was sent out to eighty Catholic doctors to meet with Dr. J. J. Walsh of New York, who was familiar with the European guilds. Those signing the invitation were Drs. Lawrence Flick, J. F. Roederer, Charles J. Hoban, Austin O'Malley, Joseph O'Malley and William P. Dempsey. The meeting was held in the Clover Room of the Bellevue Stratford at 9:00 P. M. on March 26, 1911. Dr. Walsh explained the idea and those present began our Guild. A further meeting was decided upon and at it the first officers were elected.

Dr. Lawrence Flick was made president, Dr. Ernest Laplace, vice-president, Dr. Austin O'Malley, treasurer, and Dr. William P. Dempsey, secretary. Dr. Edward Mallon, who has supplied the records of this rebirth of the Guild, was made Chairman of the Membership Committee.

A somewhat similar independent movement had started in 1893 when the Newman Clubs were founded, stressing Catholic culture and fellowship amongst those of their faith in schools of higher learning. Dr. John J. Gilbride of this city was one of the founding members.

The two movements met and strengthened each other when Father John W. Keogh, now pastor of St. Gabriels, was made chaplain of both organizations. He brought the students actively into the medical guild, and under

his guidance for twenty-five years, ending early this year, the Guild has advanced and now includes women physicians, dentists and pharmacists.

The Guild aims to bring before the professional man or woman those Catholic moral principles which apply to every-day work. The doctors present their problems and the chaplain discusses with them the moral points involved. Meetings are held four times yearly and a retreat once yearly. The meetings foster friendship, and interesting topics, other than the moral-medical ones, are presented. Some moral topics discussed are "mercy-killings," to which we are absolutely opposed; the use of anaesthesia—dispelling the false idea that the Church forbids the relief of pain; the rights of the unborn child—backing the State in its protection of these individuals. And so with our specific studies we try to make ourselves better Catholics and better doctors.

The Guild in America is now established in eighteen cities and these are joined in the Federation of Catholic Physicians' Guilds. A magazine, the official organ of the Federation is published, called the LINACRE QUARTERLY. St. Luke, St. Cosmas and St. Damian are still the patron saints; their banner is still the emblem of our Guild. We attend Mass on their feast days. The Guild is in its renaissance. I leave it with you for consideration and imitation.