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A CALL TO ACTION

By THOMAS M. BRENNAN, M.D.

President, Federation of Catholic Physicians' Guilds

Not long ago, a young woman recently married, and anticipating the arrival of her first-born, wrote asking me to recommend a Catholic obstetrician.

Just what was the thought in her mind that prompted this inquiry? Most certainly it was not that she considered the Catholic obstetrician more competent or skillful. She apparently was seeking more than abstract scientific efficiency. To feel secure and to develop complete confidence, she felt impelled to place herself in the care of a physician whom she would expect to be true to his Faith, well informed in the teachings of his Church on medico-ethical problems, and imbued with, and activated by, the spiritual fervor associated with realized Catholic teachings.

I mention this episode simply and solely to emphasize what the laity expects of a Catholic physician and, on the other hand, to

call attention to the responsibility to be assumed by the physician to live up to these expectations. How can he best fit and prepare himself adequately to fulfill this obligation? He undoubtedly has already availed himself of membership in county, state and national medical organizations and, perhaps, in one or several special societies, but has he become affiliated with the Catholic Physicians' Guild? Has he estimated how much he can get out of such an Association? Membership in the former society insures higher standards of practice, more scientific knowledge and the development of greater professional skill. On the other hand, the Guild, which is not "just another medical society" and certainly not "an association to advance the monetary gain of its members by soliciting the patronage of a Catholic clientele on the basis of Guild Affiliations," offers its members op-

portunities for the development and safeguarding of the finest and noblest of qualities which should characterize the practitioner of the healing art. It keeps him in touch with Catholic teaching on current, medico-ethical problems and encourages and stimulates him to profess the stand of his Church on these matters in the open forum of lay and professional circles. I need not emphasize the steady growth and development of the Guild movement. The Holy Father has seen fit on many occasions to voice his approval of its aims and purposes and to generously bestow his apostolic blessing. Due to his encouragement and stimulation, several International Congresses have been held.

In our own country, sixteen affiliated Guilds are now flourishing. Information at the Federation offices anticipates the organization of several new groups in the near future. We owe a great debt of gratitude and appreciation to every Bishop who has sponsored and encouraged the organization of a Guild in his diocese. A great measure of success has been contributed by the devoted and interested service of the moderator assigned to Guild work. He has been in all instances an outstanding clergyman, a worthy guide on ethical and spiritual matters, and a true friend.

Your National Federation can be no stronger than its component local groups. In truth, it can only reflect the vigor and strength of the individual Guilds. Success or

failure in this movement depends, finally, on the attitude of the individual Catholic physician to Guild membership. The officers of the Federation are determined to cooperate with the officers and members of the Guilds in bringing to the attention of every Catholic doctor, wherever he may be found, the aims and purposes of our Federation. Special efforts will be made to contact Catholic medical students and hospital internes in sectarian and non-sectarian institutions alike.

The LINACRE QUARTERLY has proven a splendid agency for the dissemination of knowledge and information concerning our ideals and activities. It has received wide and complimentary acceptance and approval. Ways and means will be found to increase its circulation, beyond our own membership, bringing it to the attention of Catholics and non-Catholics alike, but particularly to all Catholic medical men, whether they be practitioners, internes or students.

The Annual Meeting of the House of Delegates of the American Medical Association meets in New York City in 1940. This will afford a splendid opportunity for a meeting of the Federation. The Guilds in Greater New York will act as hosts. Much can be accomplished at this time in the interest of the Guild movement. A program will be elaborated by your Federation officers. Any suggestions from the Guilds for inclu-

sion in such a program will be warmly welcomed.

Upon my return from the St. Louis meeting of the American Medical Association I learned of the action of the executive officers in naming me to fill out the term of office left vacant by the death of Dr. Joseph A. Dillon, for whom I entertained a deep sense of regard, esteem and affection.

I register a feeling of inadequacy in undertaking to carry on the splendid work so ably initiated and so devotedly carried on

by our beloved Past President. However, with his example of devotion to the best interest of the Federation before me, I will carry on to the best of my ability. I simply ask your prayers and your active support as individual members. For the officers of the Federation, as well as on my own behalf, I pledge continued devoted service to the work of the Federation and the furtherance of the ideals, purposes and aims set forth in the constitution and by-laws of our organization.

Children Are Human

In their saner moments, even doting parents know that little Mabel is not an angel, but, potentially, a rational animal. In the Code of Canon Law, we meet a reaffirmation of Mabel's status. For the Code asserts that parents are under a grave obligation to care for Mabel's religious, mental and physical welfare.

The Catholic school ably supplements the work of parents in providing for the child's religious and mental needs. But that the average Catholic elementary school provides equally well for its physical well-being, is a statement not to be accepted without qualification. Perhaps it is because some school heads think that a hospital and a resident staff of nurses are implied in the task of caring for

the child's physical needs, that they conduct the school as if children had no bodies.

Nothing so elaborate is required. In our cities, at least, it should be possible to arrange with the local board of health, or with a group of friendly physicians, to give every child an adequate physical examination at least once a year. Many pupils who seem to neglect their work, or who cause trouble by bad behavior, should be given medical care instead of the customary reprehension.

The child's religious welfare comes first, but its physical welfare must not be neglected. For all of little Mabel goes to school, not merely her immortal soul.—*America*, Sept. 16, 1939.