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Catholic Physicians' Guild

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At the Crossroads of Time

The Most Reverend Thomas J. McDonough was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, December 5, 1911. He attended the parochial school of St. Agatha and West Catholic High School. After studying for the priesthood at St. Charles Seminary, Overbrook, he was ordained May 26, 1938. For three years he pursued postgraduate studies in Canon Law at Catholic University and received the doctorate in May 1941. He was loaned to the Diocese of St. Augustine, where he eventually was consecrated Auxiliary Bishop on April 30, 1947. In February 1957 he was assigned as Auxiliary Bishop to Savannah, where he was appointed the Ordinary in March 1960. On March 1, 1967, he was appointed Archbishop of Louisville where he was installed May 2, 1967. Archbishop McDonough is the Episcopal Moderator of the Bureau of Health and Hospitals. He is also on the Administrative Board of the Catholic Bishops of the United States; and is Episcopal Advisor to the National Federation of Catholic Physicians’ Guilds.

EDITOR’S NOTE: Archbishop McDonough delivered the homily which follows at the Memorial Mass of the National Federation of Catholic Physicians’ Guilds in Atlantic City, N. J., June 28. We take this opportunity to introduce our Episcopal Advisor to the national organization and readers of The Linacre Quarterly.

In the Church of the II Vatican Council, an earnest, dedicated effort is being made to include actively the laity in Her apostolic role. Perhaps today more than ever before the role of the laity has gained new dimensions and vision. This participation was meant to be a committed and almost inherent part of the life of the Church since the time of Christ. All of us in different degrees are the new ferment in the Church in the modern world.

When Christ spoke the mandate, "Go and teach all nations," He included every segment of the Church. It was a mission-wide and world-wide assignment and was universal in character. Our involvement in the Church is far reaching and all embracing. We are His standard bearers ready to cast His shadow over the entire world. Why do individuals abandon the world and seek only Christ? Christ is the world — the hope and haven of all mankind.

Unfortunately the laity for centuries have played a passive role in the activities of the Church. There was the attitude that the laity did not have an active voice; were unqualified and reluctant to bear the burdens of the pastors of the churches. It was not until the present century that the apostolate of the laity was given prominence. Our Holy Fathers, the Vicars of Christ on earth, from Leo XIII to Paul VI, have clearly defined the place of the laity in the Church. Pope Pius XII defined the role of the laity as the participation in the work of the Bishops and clergy. But it re-
quired an Ecumenical Council and the love and understanding of Pope John XXIII to put this machinery into action. And our present reigning Pontiff, Paul VI, has encouraged, even mandated Bishops and pastors of the world to bring the laity into the body of the Church by being witnesses to the words of Christ, made manifest among men. With a fervent word of gratitude I thank God for the new and enlightened lay workers who are laboring side by side with the priests of God.

This morning you, the Catholic physicians, are gathered here at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass to pay homage, loyalty and devotion to Christ, our Eucharistic King. Unusual talents have been given you to heal bodies created by the omnipotent God. You fit in quite uniquely with the II Vatican role of the layman. By talent, by learning, by understanding, by dedication, you have elected a vocation which merits the esteem and respect of your fellow man. Your vocation fits the terminology of the post-conciliar Church. Words such as involvement, commitment, witness and fulfillment are not foreign to you. On the contrary, they belong to you.

As physicians you are involved in the life of the community; as Catholic physicians you are involved in the life of the Church.

As physicians you are committed to the care of your patients; as Catholic physicians you are committed to the teachings of the Church.

As physicians you are asked daily to give witness of your talents, your training; as Catholic physicians you are constantly a witness of Christ and the universal Church.

As physicians you behold in your devotion to your patients the fulfillment of your goals in life—good doctors and exemplary humanitarians. As Catholic physicians you find fulfillment in being Catholic gentlemen who see in their fellowman the vision of Christ, the Divine physician.

In my privileged role as the Episcopal Moderator, I would be pleased to leave with you these few recommendations:

1) Be identified actively with the Church, with your parish. The Church is clamoring for your leadership. Do not become so busy that this great period in your Catholic life passes you by unnoticed.

2) Be articulate in propagating Catholic ethics, which are so valuable and meaningful to our society. Unfortunately we are confronted with the woeful lack of lay leadership in the sensitive field of legislation. The enactment of some of the contemplated laws will inevitably topple and render useless the moral fibre and conscience of America.

3) Be interested in the post-conciliar age of the Church which is at the crossroads of time. Undoubtedly the future glory of the Church is unlimited—but the help of every Catholic layman is needed.

4) Be dedicated to the permanent establishment of better understanding among all men. Can we be less concerned than Christ for our fellow man?

5) Be active members of your Catholic Physicians' Guild so that in everything you do the name of God will be glorified.

And finally, thank God for your vocation—use it for good as the Good Samaritan who had compassion for all mankind.

May the blessings of Almighty God descend upon you and may you and your loved ones possess peace and happiness in abundance.