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To the Editor of *The Linacre Quarterly*

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CATHOLIC PHYSICIANS' GUILDS OF SOUTH AMERICA

Buenos Aires, Argentina,
March 5th, 1942.

To the Editor of THE LINACRE QUARTERLY:

Dr. Carlos Alberto Castaño, president of the *Consortio de Médicos Católicos*, has handed me your letter of August 12, 1941, and asks me to answer the last paragraph of same concerning the development of friendly relations between the Catholic physicians of South America and the States.

It was in 1930 that I gathered together a group of young doctors for the purpose of commencing this movement of the Medical Guilds in the Argentina. We obtained ecclesiastical approval from the then Archbishop Msgr. Bottaro, and our first censor was Father Furlong of the Jesuits, who shortly afterwards was succeeded by Father Perez Acosta, S.J.

We have developed on the lines laid down for the Guilds of Saint Cosmas, Luke and Damian in England, by publishing a journal dedicated principally to medico-moral problems, holding lectures, and organizing congresses, etc.

The first important work we took in hand was that of the medical services for the Eucharistic Congress in the year 1934, when we organized about 23 first-aid stations, with about 100 doctors, 100 medical students and 500 nurses. Our work was spread out over the five days of the Congress, during which we had a considerable amount of casualties to attend to, principally due to heat stroke.

Our work thus being brought into prominence before the public eye, Professor Castaño was invited to become president and our *Consortio* took on a new life. Many important University professors joined the *Consortio*.

A couple of years ago we organized a week of conferences on the Encyclical "Castii Connubis."

Furthermore, in the last two years the *Consortio* has formed a number of important branches in the interior of the Republic in the towns of Rosario, Córdoba, Santa Fe, Tucuman, Salta, Rio IV, and Bahía Blanca. These guilds are following the same procedure which we have started.

It may interest you to know that other professional bodies have imitated us by forming guilds (*Consortios*) of economists, architects, engineers, lawyers, dentists and pharmacists. The progress of these

societies is naturally, as you are well aware, a slow one and their moral influence cannot be measured in material terms.

We also supply doctors to a Catholic hospital which is in process of development by the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.

During the last few years we have given regular conferences in the winter months on medico-moral problems and also on purely medical subjects. Occasionally we invite prominent men who do not belong to our guild to lecture to us, thus leading to interesting discussions.

We are pleased to state that we have received the greatest encouragement from the Hierarchy, His Eminence Cardinal Copello taking a keen interest in our progress.

The Hippocratic oath to be taken by recently-qualified graduates had been dropped by the University Authorities in Buenos Aires.—We were able to have a Christian modification adopted.

Apart from the results shown above of our work, improvement in the general Catholic life of the profession perhaps can be seen in the invitation from the Argentine Medical Association, to celebrate its 50th anniversary, asking its members to attend a Mass in memory of the deceased members of the Association at the Church of Our Lady of Good Succour.

We had an interesting programme for "Doctors' Day" ("Día del Médico") which has been fixed for the 18th of October, the feast of Saint Luke, by the authorities of the National University of Buenos Aires. We were honoured at the lunch by the presence of Monsignor Fietta, the papal nuncio.

Every year at the feast of St. Luke, after Mass, generally said by some church dignitary, the new members of the Guild are sworn to membership. The ceremony includes prayers approved by His Eminence Cardinal Copello. The ceremony is quite a picturesque one. The president kneeling at the foot of the altar in the presence of the church dignitary reads aloud the oath, which is repeated by the new members. After the ceremony a Guild breakfast for all members is held.

All this we think is particularly due to our activity, and shows that the leaders of the Medical Association are active Catholics.

Very sincerely yours,

(Signed) M. J. PETTY, F.R.C.S.,
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Católicos de Buenos Aires;
Senior Surgeon, British Hospital,
Buenos Aires.*