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## THE CATHOLIC PHYSICIANS' GUILD\*

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The subject is intriguing. The mere mention of the name is sufficient to start an argument. Objectives and motives are attributed to the Catholic Physicians' Guild, which make membership in the Guild a real challenge to every Catholic physician.

An analysis of what the Guild is *not*, will permit the medical profession to accept the Guild without misgiving. A consideration of its true character and of its necessity should make every Catholic physician desirous of membership.

The Catholic Physicians' Guild is *not another medical society*, another organization to advance the cause of medical science, to disseminate knowledge, to promote study, to encourage research. The American Medical Association and the various state and county groups serve that purpose. The Guild has no intention of encroaching upon that field. Medical science should be common property irrespective of any group, no matter what the nature of the grouping—religious, social or economic.

The Catholic Physicians' Guild is *not* an association to advance the monetary gain of its members by soliciting the patronage of a Catholic clientele on the basis of Guild affiliation. An organization

with such an aim is unworthy of any profession. A physician with adequate ability, conscientious observance of office hours and proper bedside manners needs no Guild to extend his practice. The incompetent might welcome such organization, but the Catholic is in conscience bound to possess average competency before he is morally justified in practicing medicine.

The large number of Catholic hospitals in this country might suggest the thought that the Guild is a means of securing preferential service in the Catholic institutions. The staff of most Catholic hospitals is such as to make preferential treatment on the religious basis impossible or, at least, extremely dangerous for the continued successful operation of an offending institution. If a doctor's work is good and his attention to his patients in keeping with the best traditions of the medical profession, any hospital will be anxious to render its best service in behalf of that doctor and his patients. Common sense dictates such service. A capable doctor has no worry about preferential treatment. And the incompetent physician will ultimately write his own doom, no matter what preference he may at times receive.

The Guild is not a good-fellowship affair. Means of entertainment are all too common to neces-

\* Address delivered by the Pastor of St. Peter's Cathedral, at the Guild Communion breakfast.

sitate a good-time club among a group of men who, on the whole, enjoy the means of seeking recreation according to their own tastes.

Nor is the Guild an exclusive organization founded upon professional accomplishments, a merit society of medical men.

The Catholic Physicians' Guild is solely and practically an ethical society, based upon the teachings of the Catholic Church. It is an ordinary and normal method of intelligent, professional men, having like problems, to safeguard their most cherished possession—their means of eternal salvation. It seeks in the unity of members, added courage and inspiration for the stalwart profession and undaunted practice of its moral code. Its object is directly and pre-eminently to promote the personal, spiritual welfare of its members according to Catholic doctrine and norm. It affects the medical profession only by reason of the fact that the medical profession is the physician's field of activity and the morality of its methods and practices has a definite relation to his spiritual life. Its purpose renders it worthy of every Catholic physician's support and affiliation.

The need of the Catholic Physicians' Guild is evidenced by the stress laid upon the teaching of Catholic ethics in our Catholic schools of medicine. It is evidenced by the policy of Catholic medical schools to eliminate students who give definite signs or proofs of

their determination not to conform to proper ethical standards in their personal life or in their work.

The need of the Guild for Catholic physicians is patent from only a cursory examination of the doctor's ordinary routine. Male and female, young and old, good and bad, all mankind finds its way into his office seeking but one thing: physical well-being. To preserve or restore health of the body is the purpose of his every effort. The human body is but so many muscles and nerves, so many organs and bones, so much flesh and blood. And when death frustrates his efforts, death presents itself to him primarily as the inevitable collapse of physical forces or chemical actions. Only a strong faith can eliminate or control the callousing effects of such constant experiences upon the moral, religious mentality of the practitioner. Only supernatural faith can retain for such a man the true concept of the human body as the dwelling place of an immortal soul made to God's image, of the human body as an instrument of eternal salvation or woe. The Guild aims to preserve that faith in its members.

The nature and order of a doctor's work eliminate many protections against temptation and spiritual harm. Health and disease are properties of the entire body and of both sexes. The fact that the doctor is so thoroughly acquainted with the human body neither lessens his passions nor

chills his blood when delicate situations must be confronted. His opportunities of counteracting the temptations of his medical practice are in most cases, of necessity, limited to attendance at Sunday Mass, the reception of the sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion. Like the Church he serves humanity, and his hours of service, like those of the Church, must accommodate the greater number of people. Attendance at afternoon and evening devotions, retreats, missions, parish meetings are largely impossible or burdensomely inconvenient for him.

The high esteem in which the medical profession is held offers reason for the Guild's need. This high esteem rests upon the fact of real accomplishments, and real achievements have a way of making man feel self-sufficient, not to use the word proud. Such a mental state does not become the follower of Christ, and the Guild tends to preserve the ideals of the Nazarene.

By reason of this esteem doctors are leaders in their community. The standards of their profession mark them as specially privileged by God with more than ordinary intelligence. Conse-

quently they have obligations toward the general public aside from their strict duties as men of medical knowledge, whether they appreciate these obligations or not. The Catholic public expects the Catholic physician to be a living exemplar of the Catholic faith. For the Catholic doctor to shy away from the Catholic Physicians' Guild because of its pronounced religious character brands him as lacking the courage of the convictions of his faith and as sadly in need of the wholesome influence of the Guild. Refusal to join its membership, if possible, demonstrates a lack of interest in his own spiritual welfare and indicates an indifference to the concomitant duties of his profession.

A consideration of the Guild's secondary objectives and of the opportunities in which Catholic medical men, properly organized, can exercise a powerful influence for good, would bring forth additional arguments in behalf of the Guild sufficient in themselves to merit support for the Guild and to prompt membership in its body. In all of its aspects the Guild appeals to the finest and most noble in the character of the Catholic physician.

### **New York State Legislates Against Physicians' Advertising**

A practitioner's license may now be revoked in that State on the following additional grounds:

1. Offering, undertaking or agreeing to "cure or treat disease by secret method, procedure, treatment, or medicine."

2. Advertising for patronage by means of "handbills, posters, circulars, letters, stereopticon slides, motion pictures, radios or magazines."

The Newspaper Editors' Association has its own code of ethics.