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The Buffalo Guild In Review

DR. CHARLES A. BAUDA

With this issue of the LINACRE QUARTERLY, the Catholic Physicians' Guild of Buffalo celebrates its 20th anniversary.

The Buffalo Guild was founded in 1947 under the auspices of the late John Cardinal O'Hara, who was then Bishop of Buffalo. It was in the year of the celebration of the International Eucharistic Congress, which was held in Buffalo on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Diocese. The Guild had an auspicious beginning. There were 50 members present at the First Annual Communion Breakfast on September 14, 1947.

Our first and present moderator is Reverend Michael Sekelsky. Father Sekelsky has been an understanding moderator. He has given us considerable latitude in determining our course of action, and sustained us in all of our undertakings.

The Guild's activities began with one formal meeting a year—the annual Communion Mass and breakfast. Gradually its activities have expanded to include two retreats a year and an annual spring dinner, at which an outstanding national figure is invited to speak.

The Chair of Pastoral Medicine was established in October, 1964 at St. John Vianney Seminary, the major seminary for priests in the Buffalo Diocese. The Chair was established to provide a common meeting ground among priests, doctors and lay leaders. Dr. Edward Magee Tracy, a past-president of the Buffalo

Guild, and his wife, who worked as a team in the Pre-Cana movement, conceived this idea and brought it to fruition.

In 1964, the Buffalo Guild established a Medical Mission Committee with Dr. John G. Zoll as chairman. By means of a questionnaire, Dr. Zoll was able to assess the wishes of the Guild members. He solicited the experience of Dr. Joseph E. Grady, of the Detroit Catholic Physicians' Guild, who graciously attended a meeting in Buffalo to give us the benefit of his extensive and first-hand experience in the medical mission field. It was the decision of our committee to support a native South American physician serving the medical needs of the Oblate Fathers mission at Suzanna, Brazil. A similar plan was initiated for a Bolivian mission. In addition, cash donations have been made to St. John's Medical School in Bangalore, India. Subscriptions to several A.M.A. journals were sent to the same school.

In 1965, Dr. Zoll was elected president of our Guild. He was responsible for the reactivation of the various standing committees and the appointment of a committee for updating our Constitution. He provided the inspired leadership that has spurred his successors to continue with the same dedication and zeal.

In 1966, we inaugurated the first annual White Mass observance which we celebrate each year within the Octave of the Feast Day of St. Luke. This first observance was well

attended; included were many nurses and paramedical personnel. Most Reverend James A. McNulty, D.D., Bishop of the Diocese of Buffalo, officiated at the Mass and preached a most inspiring sermon on the four Evangelists. Dr. Louis DeVincentis and Dr. Edward Zimmermann were co-chairmen of this event.

That same year, we added another project to the agenda of activities—that of a Committee on Education and Research. Dr. Robert W. O'Connor was appointed chairman of this committee. The long-range plans of this committee are to review and evaluate the educational and research facilities that are available in the Catholic hospitals in the greater Buffalo area, with the ultimate goal of improving and coordinating these facilities, to maintain the highest standard of medical practice in our community.

These projects have been pursued in addition to the activities of the following standing committees:

Health Care of Religious—Guild members provided physical examinations for 636 nuns in 1965 and 1966. Dr. Daniel McCue is chairman of this committee.

Family Life Committee—Dr. Joseph Ricotta is chairman of this committee. He heads the Family Life Clinic, which is operated under the supervision of the Family Life Department of the Diocese of Buffalo. Reverend Dino Lorenzetti is the director of the Family Life Department and spiritual advisor to the couples seeking service. This clinic provides individual guidance to married couples desiring to space their

children, using acceptable methods. Some 20 gynecologists staff the clinic.

The Family Life Committee was called upon to spearhead the battle opposing the proposed changes in the New York State abortion laws. The committee drafted a statement which was signed by all the officers of the Guild and the committee members. It was further endorsed by the signatures of 200 members of the Guild. Copies of this statement were sent to the representatives of the State Assembly and Senate who reside in the greater Buffalo area.

Pre-Cana Conferences—75 members of our Guild held Pre-Cana Conferences for 8,000 people during 1966.

By-Laws Committee—During the latter part of 1965 and the early part of 1966, Dr. Richard Leberer and his By-Laws Committee worked on a revision of our Constitution. It was updated to meet the needs and objectives of a modern-day Catholic Physicians' Guild.

National Council of Catholic Men Committee—we have been a member of this national organization since 1956. Our representative to this organization for this span of years has been Dr. Joseph Syracuse. His article on the co-operative efforts of this committee appears in this issue.

This year, our President, Dr. Floyd M. Zaepfel has undertaken the task of establishing a system of communication and dialogue between our Guild and other professional guilds as well as with members of the hierarchy. Thus far this year, we have had sessions with the priest-editor of our Diocesan newspaper; the administrator of a Catholic hos-

pital; the president of the Catholic Lawyers' Guild; the diocesan director of the Family Life Department; the director of Catholic Charities and the Chancellor of the Diocese. These have all been very fruitful and mutually satisfactory meetings. They were the sort of meetings in which misconceptions and misunderstandings were dissipated by dialogue. These meetings have served to bring the various groups to an awareness of the many functions of an active Catholic Physicians' Guild and the ready source of specialized talent that is at the disposal of the hierarchy as well as other religious and lay organizations of our community. This, in essence, is what can be accomplished by Catholic Physicians' Guilds, with inspired leadership that motivates the members to Catholic action.

At times such as these, when the spirit of ecumenism has been misconstrued as a reason for abandoning all Catholic action, it should be heartening that in Buffalo we feel there is greater need now, than ever before, to have strong Catholic action groups which our Christian brethren may emulate.

This issue is dedicated to the Catholic physicians in Buffalo who are imbued with the thought that, in the light of the directive of Vatican Council II counseling greater participation in the lay apostolate, organized effort through Catholic Physicians' Guilds provides excellent means for effective action and responsible leadership.

DR. BAUDA is the associate editor of this August issue of LQ.