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The Thomas Linacre Medical Guild

*The Catholic Medical Students' Organization
at the University of Pennsylvania*

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Chaplain

NON-SECTARIAN EDUCATION definitely has its shortcomings. After several years of graduate study and some fifteen years as a Priest-Chaplain in such environment, I am convinced that it is not good for a Catholic who treasures his Faith. Materialism prevails everywhere and, often before the unsuspecting Catholic adverts to it, he is immeasurably infected. If it were possible, I would advise Catholics, because of these dangers, to veer themselves away from this type education. Unfortunately, however, such advice is not always feasible. Catholics, especially those pursuing the medical profession, find it necessary to consider non-sectarian schools of medicine.

Realizing this and understanding full well what great dangers to the Faith await such Catholic students in these non-sectarian schools of medicine we have, in keeping with the instructions of His Holiness Pope Pius X, established THE THOMAS LINACRE MEDICAL GUILD at the University of Pennsylvania and instituted a complete course of instructions in medical-ethics that such Catholic students may find it possible to protect the Faith that is theirs, thereby preparing themselves for the august role of a true and devout Catholic physician.

When the Catholic student affiliates himself with this Guild, when he interests himself enthusiastically in such courses of instruction, the impact of these dangers is greatly reduced . . . and his Faith remains militant. Unfortunately, however, this doesn't always happen. Some Catholic students, pre-medical graduates of Catholic colleges, prefer to ignore the Guild and its course of instructions as being unimportant for them because *they have had courses of ethics*. This is a great mistake.

With all respect to their Catholic pre-medical training, their past courses in ethics, by comparison, fall short of the mark and it is easy to understand why. Other Catholic students, invariably, the type already affected by materialism of non-sectarian education, ignore the Guild and our course of instructions as being *unscientific*. What a pity! Happily, though, there is

always a goodly number of Catholic students, and even some who aren't, who do value the Guild and its course of instructions in its proper light.

THE THOMAS LINACRE GUILD meets every second Wednesday evening. Meetings last one hour. I conduct the course of instructions which works in a four-year cycle so as to avoid duplication. Occasionally, when possible, outstanding medical men are invited as guest lecturers and ample opportunity is afforded Guild members to present questions. *The Medico-Moral Problems* series of booklets by Gerald Kelly, S.J. are the basis of the course in medical ethics for the first part of the four-year cycle.

If it be true, as an old Latin adage puts it, "Honor est in honoranti, non in honorato," (Honor is in the one honoring, not in the one honored), then the members of THE THOMAS LINACRE MEDICAL GUILD take a large measure of honor unto themselves in honoring such a distinctive gentleman as Thomas Linacre, an eminent scholar, an esteemed physician, and a devout Roman Catholic priest.

Living in an age when it was far from fashionable, to say nothing of its dangers, to evidence one's loyalty to the true Faith, Thomas Linacre, long-time friend and personal physician to Henry VIII, not only chose to follow the dictates of his conscience in remaining faithful to his Catholic religion, and this in spite of serious and threatening opposition from his contemporaries, but went so far as to leave all earthly honors behind him and become a Roman Catholic priest.

How unimpaired his practical judgment of men and affairs was at the time he made this change from royal physician to simple priest, how keen a grasp he had on medicine itself, can best be gathered from the sagacity he displayed in his foundation of the Royal College of Physicians, an institution that marked the first attempt to secure the regulation of the practice of medicine in England and which, thanks to its founder's wonderful foresight and practical wisdom, remains down to our own day, under its original constitution, one of the most effective and highly honored of British scientific institutions.

In Thomas Linacre, present-day medical men have a fine exemplar, one whom they would do well to emulate. With him, *first things came first*. God came first; his neighbour second and himself . . . last. What a pattern for the modern physician . . . a pattern that would unquestionably lead the physician to walk in the footsteps of Christ Himself . . . which is just as it should be!