

***RADIOMENSE OF HIS HOLINESS PIO XII  
TO THE FIRST CATHOLIC WORLD HEALTH CONFERENCE\_\****

*Sunday, July 27, 1958*

We send you our warmest greetings, dear sons and daughters gathered in Brussels to celebrate the "First World Catholic Conference on Health". The solemn Mass, which you just attended in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart, has collected your intentions and your prayers in a single supplication, invoking from heaven the grace that transforms and vivifies, so that the works in which you go to to participate, clearly manifest to your eyes and to all of you the audacity and greatness of the ideal that guides you.

In truth, this "First World Catholic Health Conference" is presented as a very expressive event of the role that corresponds to you in today's society. And its marvelous setting, that deployment of material and cultural resources of the Nations in an emulation in which each one strives to enhance the best and most original that it has, suggests and symbolizes in a certain way the dominant lines of your reflections. In the course of these last years, the medical profession and all those who assume health protection with it have obtained advantages from the rapid progress of science and its applications and have participated in the evolution of social institutions. The foundation and development of your various Federations respond to the need to unite the efforts of Catholics in such an important field. It is not surprising if in the general theme of the Conference, «Christianity and health», the study of collaboration is included, within the health team and within the community, of those responsible for health. We wish the best success to the VIII Congress of Catholic Doctors, to the V Congress of the International Federation of Catholic Pharmacists, to the VI Congress of the Catholic International Committee of Nurses and Medical-Social Assistants, to the I Congress of the International Federation of Hospital Institutions, as well as the IV International Congress of Hospital Chaplains.

Although your works do not cover but a part of the vast matter that you propose to examine, the mere fact of having attempted this confrontation will mark an important stage in the health action of Catholics. Now, in effect, you are aware of the real dimensions of your community and the extent of your responsibilities on both the human and the religious levels.

Previously, the study of medical morality could be undertaken, with only a quick glance at everything that goes beyond the patient's individual relationships with the doctor or the nurse. The considerable development of the hospital services, the increasing specialization of the techniques of the cures, the existence of powerful institutions of social assistance, the call of the underdeveloped countries, are other factors that have considerably extended the old perspectives and require a modernization and a deepening of the meaning of "human relations" between the patient and his family on the one hand, and those responsible for health and social organisms on the other.

We would like, as an introduction to your work, to briefly evoke the obstacles to collaboration; then, the conditions of an effective collaboration, and finally, the objectives that it must propose, in particular among Catholics.

The defects that prevent a harmonious collaboration in the health team may already come from their own members, from the sick person and from the family, and from the institutions on which both depend. We do not intend to analyze in detail the specific situations in which these drawbacks are manifested; your congresses were preceded by surveys aimed precisely at making them manifest. But sticking to the causes that hinder collaboration among the health personnel themselves, we would like to point out two main ones: one of an intellectual nature, another of a moral nature. Very often, a certain narrowness of judgment that, voluntarily or not, refuses to broaden its horizons, take into account all the elements of a situation, it prevents the interested party from perceiving the insufficiencies of his personal action and the need to accept the intervention of another. It is difficult, in general, to accept the point of view of others, to look at events as they see it, to understand as they do the inconveniences of such a procedure, of such an attitude, the weight of certain benefits; nor is it easy to admit that a younger one, despite his lesser experience, may have more fruitful ideas. In addition, work habits and routine make every attempt to change, any revision of methods, painful. You indicate, for example, that a **nurse** will be tempted to show objections, when she sees a different treatment applied to a hospital than she has seen practiced throughout her studies by a famous specialist. Next to the intellectual obstacles, Moral obstacles also have a wide position. The spirit of surrender and sacrifice in the health team constitutes one of its most beautiful titles for the recognition and admiration of all. But no one would dare pretend that in the detail of the comings and goings of every day there are never any motives that reveal the common weaknesses of humanity: susceptibility, impatience, desire to prevail, intolerance of discipline; in a word: the exaggerated affirmation of the individual and his comforts, to the detriment of the demands posed by group cohesion and the interests of the community

We have thus come to the consideration of the positive conditions of effective collaboration. Since certain flaws of appreciation, perhaps unnoticed, come from the ignorance, at least practical, of the essential principles of collaboration, it is important to highlight them and make them a deeper study. It is the object of your various Congresses. The growing complexity of the health organization, the price of incessant progress, entails the pure need of each of its members to better decide their position within the group of which they are a part. Thus, we are among the preliminary work of the technical committee of the **Congress of Nurses and Medical-Social Assistants** a detailed collaboration of the notion of "health team", according to **four levels: the care of the sick in the hospital or home, the local medico-social services, the nation's and public health administration** and, finally, **the specialized sector in the fight against certain own pests of a country or a region**. For each of these cases, it is necessary to determine what are the forms of health teams existing, their purpose, their means of action, their authority, their composition. This table, thus delimited, allows to better clarify the position that the **nurse** will have in it and the conditions that it will have to meet to properly fill its role. The doctors, meanwhile, will apply to the problems of collaboration raised in daily practice and in the institutions of assistance, where they come into contact not only with the sick and with **the nurses**, but also with the chaplains, the administrative services, the subordinate staff, the families of the sick, the social security agencies and the public authorities. You will have the constant concern to solve each one of these questions, never forgetting the whole perspective, to which the particular solutions are subordinated, that is, the therapeutic goal both individual and social, inseparable in turn from the moral and religious imperatives whose interpreter is the Church.

The work of reflection and examination of the problems will bear little fruit if it does not lead, on the practical plan, to a better organization of the health team, creating among its members a true unity, as well in the principles to be followed as in the media. concrete to apply them. For this it is not enough to meet at the head of the patient; it is also necessary to know how to meet each other, to prepare exchanges of frequent and cordial ideas, to combine their technical or psychological difficulties. It is also necessary that a hierarchy of functions determines the authority and responsibility of each one. A group discipline seems indispensable - whatever the way it is understood - but it will not be accepted and will not bear fruit except insofar as it is sustained within a common fervor,

That is why we want to evoke also the essential objectives proposed by those responsible for health through their collaboration. The purpose that unifies its activity is obviously the preservation or restoration of the health of individuals and social groups. However, it is not uncommon for other secondary purposes, closer, more attractive, more useful immediately, perhaps request their interest and blur the preponderance of the main purpose for some time. Do not ignore the possibility of seeing the patient treated not as a person, but as a case that is studied or experienced. It happens that dangerous investigations are undertaken to perfect the diagnosis, when those will not have real utility for the application of the treatment, or when the patient suffers the annoying consequences of administrative measures aimed at ensuring, above all, the comfort of the services. In these cases, the human, personal element is relegated to the background in spite of its determining importance.

These pitfalls are well known to you, and we have reminded you of them before. We do not insist, then; but we would like to underline still the highest, most noble characteristic of your therapeutic action, which expresses your current Conference with its title of catholic. Do not see in it a simple extrinsic denomination, without influence on the proper object of your work, as if Catholicism did not have to propose to its adherents more than an improved code of ethics, a detailed list of prohibited or permitted actions. It is, in fact, something very different. Christians, in effect, are bearers of a message and a life, which give each of their acts a particular meaning. Their baptismal character makes them disciples of Christ and children of the Church, in whose work they have committed themselves. Thus, your daily work, the most routine in appearance, takes its meaning from the perspective opened by the Lord in the days of his earthly existence: "Afternoon," says Saint Mark, "after sunset, he was presented with all the sick and possessed, and the whole city was gathered at the door. And he healed many sick afflicted with various evils and drove out many demons »(Mc 1, 32).

In imitation of Christ, who relieved so many physical and moral miseries to invite men to see in Him "the resurrection and life" ( Jn11, 25), that through your acts you can guess the inspiration that they come from, your adherence to the visible Church and to the Holy Spirit, who animates them "as a source of water that leaps to eternal life" ( Jn 4, 14).

Your activity, penetrated with an evangelical spirit, will also reach a broader extension and become truly universal. It is necessary to emphasize it, since your Congress is situated in the framework of an Exhibition that wants to express the noblest aspirations of the current world and that invites stimulating approaches. No one can possess the spirit of Christ without sharing the concerns of all his brothers, wherever they may be, of whatever race they may be, or without ardently wishing to lavish on them the benefits still reserved for certain privileged countries. In addition to acute economic needs, underdeveloped countries often present cruel

deficiencies from the health point of view. You know how zealously Catholics are employed in caring for the sick in hospitals, clinics, dispensaries, maternities, wherever they are present and mainly in the less gifted territories; but since there is still much to be done before the problems of public health are completely mastered, your international organizations find here a field widely open to their efforts; they must arouse, among others, the collaboration of the members of the medical staff, of the private individuals, of the private organisms, of the State, to stop as soon as possible the epidemic and endemic diseases, which every year are hung over so many impotent victims. your international organizations find here a field widely open to their efforts; they must arouse, among others, the collaboration of the members of the medical staff, of the private individuals, of the private organisms, of the State, to stop as soon as possible the epidemic and endemic diseases, which every year are hung over so many impotent victims. your international organizations find here a field widely open to their efforts; they must arouse, among others, the collaboration of the members of the medical staff, of the private individuals, of the private organisms, of the State, to stop as soon as possible the epidemic and endemic diseases, which every year are hung over so many impotent victims.

We wish you, dear sons and daughters, that in you, during these days of study, reflection, friendly exchanges, the feeling of not forming within the Catholic Church but the same family united by the common interest towards the sanitary problems and mainly by the conscience of being called to fulfill an important mission in the service of the Church: to carry out, completely, the building of the Body of Christ (cf *Eph 4, 12*), protecting the health of its members so that they can fully undertake the tasks that the Lord entrusts to them and discover through you one of the most comforting aspects of the Redemption.

As a testimony of Our esteem and of Our affection, and as a pledge of the divine favors that We invoke upon you, on your families, on your sick, those who lavish your care and your dedication, we give you with all our heart Our Apostolic Blessing.

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