

THE CATENIAN ASSOCIATION

Notes for New Members

Introduction

The Catenian Association is an international association of Catholic men who meet locally, at least, once a month at local branches and who share common values. Members form a close community with shared spiritual values, offering life long support and friendship reflecting Christian love for one another and for their families. Members are drawn from all walks of life and, consequently, have a vast range of differing talents and experience; they could, in fact, be a collection of men drawn from any church congregation, all with similar anxieties, aspirations, concerns but all have a common bond as practicing Catholics.

Most branches, known as Circles, have about 30 or 40 members all of whom are practising Catholics. There are over 300 Circles in the U.K. and overseas with a total membership in excess of 10,000.

Origins

The Association was founded in Manchester, England, in 1908, at a time of widespread anti-Catholicism. Fostered by Bishop Charles Casartelli, of Salford, its purpose was to encourage Catholic laymen in the professions, commerce or the public services to meet socially. They were to use the corporate strength thus engendered to further their own legitimate interests and to make a proper contribution to the life of the religious and secular community.

Since then Catholics have become accepted throughout western society but Christian practice has declined and its beliefs have increasingly been abandoned. There is still a need for Catholics to socialize and, through so doing, to encourage each other to lead full Christian lives.

Family Values

Today, not only are religious views ignored but groups supporting euthanasia, abortion, homosexuality and legalization of drugs continue to spread their views virtually unchallenged. We now live in a very secular society where religion, marriage, family or any views supportive of morality are ignored or, worse still, derided. The Catenian Association takes pride in its efforts, even if its only achievement at the end of each monthly meeting is to send members home with their moral convictions reinforced so that they can be better husbands, more competent fathers or dutiful sons.

The keyword of the Association is brotherly love. Members become part of a community offering lifelong support and friendship. They obtain a wide circle of Catholic friends, people who share similar values, and become conscious of the strong bonds of Christian love that develop. Members and their families gain much enjoyment from belonging. They may also benefit from the example set by so many members in the practice of the Faith, something that may be an inspiration in their own lives.

Brotherhood

Catenians constitute a close brotherhood, the members of which are pledged to help one another, particularly in times of difficulty or need. Such help may take the form of advice or influence, used only in a fair and proper manner, but occasionally financial support may be required and against this contingency all members undertake to contribute realistically to the benevolent funds.

The Association's published membership list is confidential to members to prevent its unauthorized use, e.g. for commercial purposes. However, the Association is ready to confirm, in response to any legitimate enquiry, for example, from a governmental body, whether or not anyone is a member. Those applying for membership are not expected to hide this from employers who might be expected to have a legitimate interest in knowing.

Activities

The Association's basic activity is the monthly meeting of each circle, at which local members meet together and at which visitors from other circles are particularly welcome. The Circle arranges events regularly and, normally, publishes an annual programme. These are varied and usually include religious, social, cultural, sports and intellectual elements. Many events include wives and families. Some of these need to be booked in advance and it is necessary to give as much notice as possible so that the Circle officer in charge can arrange the appropriate facilities; as you would expect, such bookings usually commit you to the cost of the event. Opportunities also exist to attend events organized by other Circles and, in a wider area, by your local Province.

The Association does not concern itself with party political issues. Its members are encouraged, as individuals, to be active citizens and committed Catholics. Many members are introduced to voluntary works through others in the Association. Many Catenians have distinguished themselves in every walk of life and many continue to do so; others go quietly about their daily lives offering their time and skills to the Church and the wider community. The Association continually provides encouragement and support to the many and varied pursuits of its members.

Fundraising is secondary to its aims but, from time to time, the Association does raise funds through its members for specific religious or charitable purposes. It also sponsors the Catenian Bursary Fund, which offers grants to young people embarking on altruistic projects. At a local level, throughout the Association, there is continual fundraising for a wide range of charities.

Structure

Local units of the Association are called circles and these are now established across Great Britain and Australia, where they are grouped into provinces. There are also circles in central and southern Africa, Hong Kong, Ireland and Malta. The governing body of the Association is the Grand Council and there is an office with a small permanent staff. At regional level, the circles are grouped into Provinces.

The local Circle, one of which you are joining, is the basic operating unit of the Association. Each circle has a meeting once monthly on the same day of the week and on the same week of the month. Occasionally, alternative arrangements have to be made for holidays. As a member of the Circle, you will be expected to attend regularly unless prevented by legitimate causes; by so doing, you will add value to the Circle of Brothers and, in return, derive benefit for yourself.

Obligations

The obligations of membership are:

1. To be and to remain a practising Catholic.
2. To support the aims of the Association.
3. To attend the monthly circle meeting punctually and regularly, even when this entails personal inconvenience.
4. To take part in inter-circle visiting and to enlarge one's friendships within the brotherhood.
5. To participate actively in the social programme of the Circle and of the Association.
6. To attend president's Sundays, requiems and other religious occasions arranged within the Association.
7. To visit brothers who are sick and to pray for them and for those who have died.
8. To pay promptly subscriptions and other dues, including those for social functions and to contribute realistically to the Association's charities.
9. To accept office when practicable and to take an active part in the Association's affairs.
10. To sponsor suitable candidates for membership.

Visiting

Your Circle provides the opportunity for you and your family to meet many people and to make new friends. Visiting other Circle's meetings increases these opportunities many fold and you are strongly encouraged to do so. Not to avail of the facility to visit would be to deny you the great benefits of getting to know a much larger number of members.

About Your Sponsor

It is likely that you will have been invited to join the Catenian Association by someone known to you or to whom you have been introduced; this person is your sponsor and it is to him that, in the first instance, you should look for guidance on matters to do with the Association. Whilst the officers of the Circle have specific responsibilities in providing advice and guidance, your sponsor will assist you concerning dress, protocol and procedures. You should never hesitate to consult him on any matter, particularly in your early contacts with the Circle.

Costs

The administration of the Circle and the Association incurs costs and, hence it is necessary to pay an annual subscription; most of this goes to the Circle and small amounts to the running of Province and the head office of the Association. Each Circle sets its own subscription at its annual general meeting and, hence, you have the opportunity to be party to the decision. Indeed, you are strongly encouraged to attend such meetings. The Circle Council is held to account for expenditure by the circle members and, as you would expect, costs are always kept as low as possible.

Your sponsor should be able to advise you concerning the annual subscription to your new Circle.