

From "Lay Apostolate in the Philippines and Japan"
by
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THE FURROW (Magnmoth), February 1955

Student Catholic Action is a movement that must be given a prominent place in any historical account of the lay apostolate in the Philippines. Founded in 1936 in Manila by Father Edward J. McCarthy of the Magnmoth Mission, at the request of Archbishop O'Doherty, it undertook to provide religious instruction for as many students as it could reach. Its first assignment was to prepare the thousands of Catholic students in the non-sectarian and public schools in Manila for an intelligent and organised participation in the International Eucharistic Congress in Manila in 1937.

There are three kinds of school in the city of Manila. There are the Catholic schools, there are the Public Schools run by the government, in which religion does not form a part of the curriculum, but a purely education is given. The third class is what are called Non-Sectarian schools. These are private schools in which religion does not form part of the curriculum.

Student Catholic Action undertakes the organisation and training of students in Catholic schools to act as volunteer catechists for undenominational schools. The organisation practically ceased during the Japanese occupation, but it arose again with new vigour at the end of the war. In 1947, it was instructing 10,000 students in Manila's undenominational schools. By 1953 the number benefitting had increased to 150,000.

In 1953 Student Catholic Action had a membership of 18,026. Their activities were divided almost equally between the Catholic and the non-sectarian schools. A goal of 30,000 membership has been set. It has a precise and practical constitution.

At first primarily a catechetical organisation, Student Catholic Action has widened its scope to include other aims of apostolic worth. It has adopted many of the Jesuit techniques. The idea now is to organise cells of Catholic Action in every school and, if possible, in every classroom, so as to Christianise the capital's student body by peaceful penetration. For example, it encourages members to write for the student magazine, to get themselves elected to the councils of student organisations, to influence social activities, and so on.

Student Catholic Action trains leaders who can effectively utilise all existing campus organisations to promote the Catholic way of life in academic, social, cultural and recreational affairs. Realising the religious demands of the big Catholic majority of their students,



The administrators of non-sectarian universities have been only too glad to facilitate the giving of religious instruction by Student Catholic Action members. The offering of Holy Mass has now become the centre of all university activities. The Catholic hierarchy of the Philippines has expressed its confidence in the organisation by pronouncing it the officially mandated national Catholic organisation for students in the Philippines. Incidentally, it has become the biggest group of students ever brought together in the Philippines on a permanent organisational basis.

In 1953, 150,000 - more than sixty per cent. of the student body of Manila - were receiving adequate religious instruction, thanks to Student Catholic Action. Another beneficial result is that the faculties of non-sectarian schools now desire to have Catholic priests as deans. A third result is that a strongly Catholic, alert and watchful intelligentsia is being built up in the Philippines.

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