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By Rev. Patrick J. Flynn
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Sodality of Our Lady
Pope Terms Sodalties Among Main Catholic Action Units

The Sodality of Our Lady is "Catholic Action under the auspices and inspiration of the Blessed Virgin Mary," according to Pope Pius XII in a new apostolic constitution recently issued to the sodalities of the world.

THE RESTATEMENT of Sodality ideals and programs by the Holy Father is timely for Sodality of the Rochester Diocese who this week have gathered 1800 strong at Aquinas Institute in Rochester for a two-day "Congress of Mary" designed to revitalize sodality programs in the schools and parishes of the diocese.

Quoting his predecessor, Pope Pius XI, the Holy Father says that Sodalties "are and will continue to be a means of safeguarding and protecting the formation of outstanding Catholics."



Our Lady are no obstacle whatever to their being called with the fullest right "Catholic Action under the auspices and inspiration of the Blessed Virgin Mary." As they have been in the past, they are and will continue to be a means of safeguarding and protecting the

formation of outstanding Catholics."

In reference to the whole subject of Catholic Action, the Holy Father makes some very useful observations: "As has often been declared by this Apostolic See, Catholic Action is not confined within a closed circle, hemmed in, as it were, by certain rigidly determined limits that must not be transgressed, nor is it such that it pursues its object according to a special method and system, so as to abolish or absorb the other active Catholic organizations."

As regards their name, the Holy Father says: "These Sodalties are to be called 'Sodalties of Our Lady' not only because they take their name from the Blessed Virgin Mary, but especially because each Sodality makes profession of special devotion to the Mother of God and is dedicated to her by a complete consecration."

"Among the primary ends of sodalties," His Holiness declares, "are to be reckoned every kind of apostolate, especially the social apostolate for the propagation of the Kingdom of Christ and the defense of ecclesiastical rights entrusted to them by the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy."

THE PURPOSE of this new papal document is "to declare ratified and solemnly confirmed the privileges and great favors which in the course of almost four centuries have been bestowed on the Sodalties of Our Lady."

The Holy Father reviews the remarkable accomplishments of the Sodalties of Our Lady and declares that "Sodalties are rightly to be considered among the chief promoters of Catholic Action."

Describing the work of the Sodalties the Holy Father says: "Beholding from the See of Peter, as if from a lofty watchtower of the entire world, the wonderful zeal of the faithful everywhere in protecting, defending and promoting the faith, we consider as deserving special praise the worthy members of the Sodalties of Our Lady. From the very beginning they have looked on as their own and completely according to their rules have undertaken individually or collectively any apostolic work approved by the Church and under the leadership of their Pastors."

"The repeated and lucid pronouncements of the Roman Pontiffs have eloquently proved how well the Sodalties fulfilled this task and with what happy results for the advancement of religion. In this present age disturbed by so many upheavals, it is a great consolation for us to contemplate the Sodalties of Our Lady all over the world working strenuously and effectively in every field of the apostolate."

"THE FACT that they ever had the common good of the Church at heart and not some private interest," says the Holy Father "is proved by the unimpeachable witness of that most brilliant series of Sodalties in which Mother Church has decreed the supreme honors of the Altars. Their glory, though lustre not only on the secular clergy and on many religious families since ten members of the Sodalties of Our Lady became founders of new Religious Orders and Congregations."

"All this," the Holy Father points out "goes to show clearly that the Sodalties of Our Lady are associations imbued with an apostolic spirit which not only urge their members, who are sometimes led to the very heights of sanctity, to strive to obtain under the guidance of their Pastors, the Christian perfection and eternal salvation of others, and to safeguard the rights of the Church, but also provide tireless heralds of the Virgin Mother of God and fully trained propagators of the Kingdom of Christ."

"Hence, whether one considers the rules and purpose of the Sodalties of Our Lady or what they have achieved, there is no characteristic lacking which belongs to Catholic Action since this is correctly defined, as Our Predecessor of happy memory Pius XI so often declared: 'The apostolate of the faithful who assist the Church and to a certain extent complete its pastoral work.'"

"The structure and peculiar character of the Sodalties of

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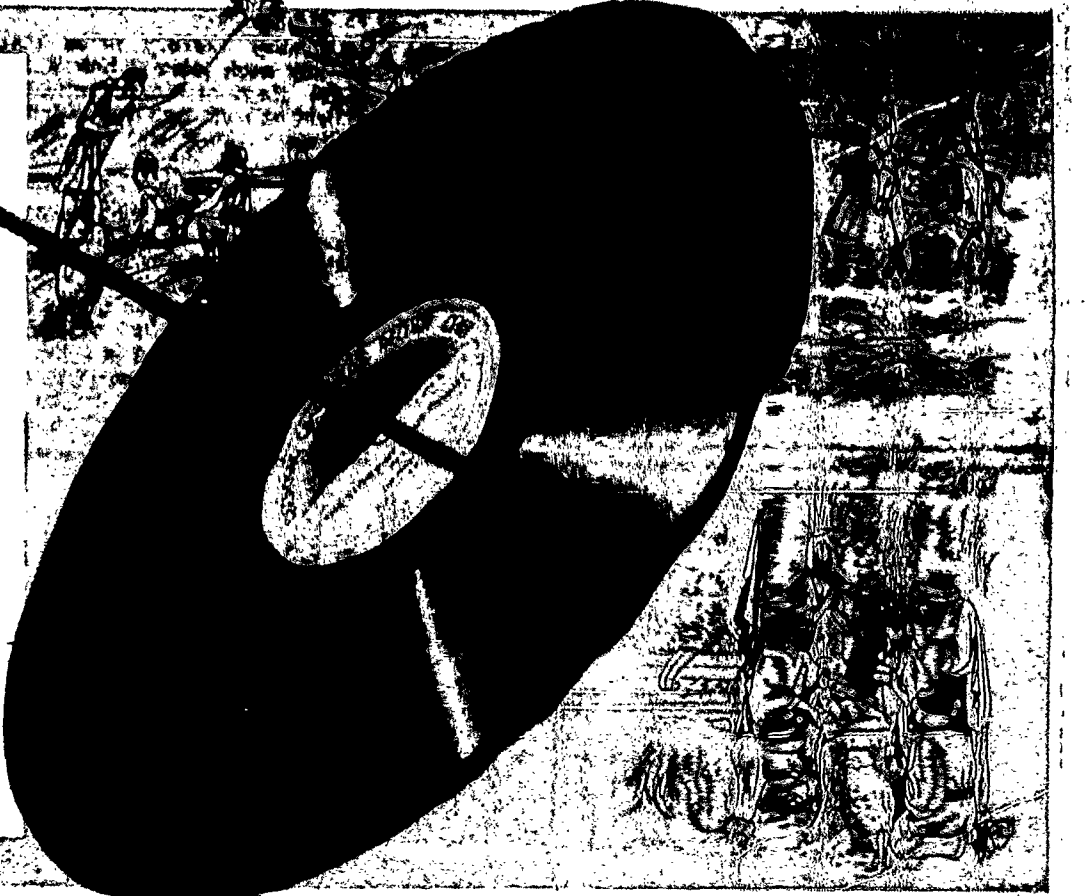
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