

The Catenian Association, or sometimes referred to as The Catenians

The Catenian Association is an international brotherhood of practising Catholic laymen who meet socially, at least once a month, in local branches, known as Circles. Members refer to each other as 'brother'. This reflects the strength of the mutual support they give to each other and their families, which is based on the shared values of their Catholic belief and practice.

In an increasingly secular society, the Association provides a sociable and supporting haven (an oasis of calm) for those facing challenges to their beliefs and moral values in their business, professional and family lives. Through their membership Catenians are helped to enjoy and fulfill their various vocations in life. Firstly as baptised Christians and also in their family as a husband and father; in their chosen profession or workplace; within the civil community and within the church.

The Association's name is derived from the Latin 'Catena' (a chain) with the Circles being the links in the chain. The emblem consists of a continuous chain of links surrounding a cross. This symbolizes that our Catholic faith is at the centre of all we do.

The Association is not a fund raising agent for the Catholic Church, nor is it a Catholic action group. However, it is a group of active Catholics. On an individual basis, Catenians take an active part in the life of their parishes and many play a leading role in their dioceses and Catholic lay organisations locally and nationally. The Association is non-political though Catenians are prominent in many aspects of public life and service.

The Aims of the Association

- **to foster brotherly love among the members.**
- **to develop social bonds among the members and their families.**
- **to advance the interests of members and their dependants by individual or collective action.**
- **to advance the interests of young Catholics and to assist them in the choice or pursuit of a career.**
- **to establish, maintain and administer benevolent funds.**
- **to promote and support The Catenian Association Benevolent and Children's Fund ("the Benevolent Fund") and the Catenian Bursary Fund.***

***This fund exists to help young Catholics between 16 and 24 to undertake voluntary work that benefits other people and assists a volunteer's personal development**

Origins of the Catenian Association

The Catenian Association undoubtedly owes its existence to the vision of Bishop Casartelli, who became Bishop of Salford in 1903. At that time there were only one and a half million Catholics in England and Wales and they were still viewed with suspicion by many of the population. These Catholics were divided between the very rich, landed Catholic gentry and the very poor: especially the recent immigrant Irish who had arrived over the previous 50 years.

However there were signs of an emerging Catholic middle class, which was unsure of its place in society. Bishop Casartelli recognised this, and in October 1903 in his first Pastoral letter, 'The Signs of the Times' he called on Catholic laymen "to go forth to all the interests of the commonwealth of which we are part", going on to say that he wanted the laity to play their role "...in matters social, municipal, philanthropic, educational, artistic, literary in which we may use the powers we enjoy".

In 1906 a Liberal Government, pledged to abolish Voluntary (including Catholic) schools was returned with a massive majority. In the Salford

Diocese Bishop Cassartelli formed the Catholic Federation to fight this. Two years later in 1908, and with the active encouragement of the Bishop, a number of Federation's leading lights became the founder members of 'The Chums Benevolent Association', which two years later adopted its present title 'The Catenian Association'. The name is taken from 'Catena' the Latin for chain.

The Catenian Association today

There are over 10,000 members in Australia, Great Britain, Ireland, India, Malta, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe. They belong to one or more of approximately 300 Circles. As part of the process of extending the Association into new areas there are also a growing number of Groups comprising a smaller number of members than is required for Circle status.

The Circles are grouped into geographic Provinces or Area Councils. Each Province has a representative known as a Director who serves on the Grand Council, which is the governing body of the Association. A Grand President (who is elected annually from those serving on Grand Council), Grand Secretary, Grand Treasurer and three immediate past Grand Presidents complete the Grand Council. The main website is www.thecatenians.com

The incoming Grand President for 2012-13 is John Mottram from Kidderminster in England

The ethos of the Association can perhaps best be summed up by the words used by a Circle President when addressing someone about to be enrolled:

"... It is our purpose to encourage our brothers and their families to meet socially. We strive to help one another as far as we may to happiness and prosperity; and should a Brother suffer misfortune, our concern is to aid him in full measure. We are proudly Catholic, and as a Brotherhood we are non-political. We do not permit wrangling to mar our meetings, nor do we tolerate excesses in the behaviour of Brothers. We expect you to observe faithfully all the obligations of life, to be charitable in judgement, forbearing in temper and slow to condemn. We look to find a Brother, if husband, loving and trustworthy; if father ever mindful of the moral and material well-being of your children and dependents; as a son, dutiful and considerate; and as a friend steadfast and true ..."