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Monday - 05/15/2006

Zip Time °F °C	000000	Weather Underground
Sunrise: 05:33 AM		Moon Set: 06:15 AM
Sunset: 09:28 PM		
Moon Rise: 12:15 AM		
Moon Set: 06:15 AM		

Last Updated: Thursday - 05/11/2006

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Fr. Ron Rolheiser

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Exploring the
Catholic Catechism

Skene advocates for Catholic care

2006 Performance Citation Award winner says Grey Nuns are her mentor

By BILL GLEN
WCR Staff Writer
Edmonton

Every time she is mistaken for a nun, Mary Pat Skene feels honoured.

"I was introduced as Sister Mary Pat and her husband Ian," Skene told the WCR with a laugh. "I told the archbishop (Thomas Collins) that I was starting something new."

For her lengthy and dedicated service to Catholic health care in Canada, Skene was presented with the Catholic Health Association of Canada 2006 Performance Citation Award during CHAC's annual convention May 5-7 in Edmonton.

The award is the highest distinction in Catholic health care in Canada. Citation awards were also presented to Gerald Herkel from Burnaby, B.C., and Raymond Lafond from Winnipeg.

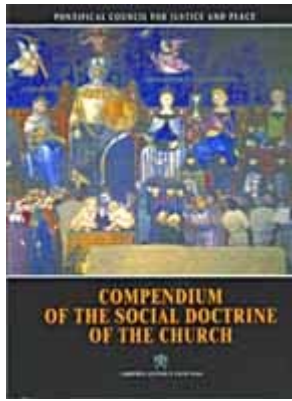
"I was absolutely shocked to receive the award," Skene said. "I accept it with feelings of joy and humility. It is a wonderful recognition."

Skene is currently executive director of the Sisters of Charity (Grey Nuns) of Alberta. She also serves as board chair for both Youville Home in St. Albert and La Salle - a safe place for women and their children fleeing abusive relationships.

A leader



- WCR photo by Bill Glen
Mary Pat Skene, executive director of the Sisters of Charity (Grey Nuns) of Alberta, has been honoured with the Catholic Health Association of Canada, 2006 Performance Citation Award.



**Compendium
of the
Social Doctrine
of the Church**

She got involved with Catholic health care in the mid-1980s and since then she has held several leadership positions as a board member of CHAC and in Catholic organizations, many of which have been run by the Grey Nuns.

"The Grey Nuns have been my mentor in Catholic health care," she said.

Skene was in charge of nursing for the Grey Nuns Hospital in south Edmonton when it was built. From there, she became vice-president of nursing for the Edmonton General and Grey Nuns hospitals. She served as vice-president of community health for the Capital Health Authority before moving to Saskatoon to be president and CEO of St. Paul's Hospital. She later became president and CEO of the Saskatchewan Catholic Health Corp.

Skene retired briefly before returning to Edmonton, taking on her current position with the Grey Nuns.

Skene also chairs the health and pastoral ministries committee for the Edmonton Archdiocese.

"The Grey Nuns' vision has always spoken to my heart."

- Mary Pat Skene

The committee was formed by the archbishop about four years ago to see if people were falling through the cracks between the institutional environment (hospital) and the home. If they were, Collins wanted to know what could be done.

"The Grey Nuns' vision has always spoken to my heart," Skene said.

"It is to be vibrant and compassionate signs of hope in our broken world. It has always driven me to impress those values of human dignity and care in every workplace I've been a part of. It gives me energy every morning."

Pat Selmsler is a registered nurse who has known Skene for 15 years. She is currently a board member with Youville Home.

"She is probably the strongest advocate for Catholic health care I've ever known. She is compassionate and she knows what Catholic health care means."

Selmsler continues to be impressed with Skene's ability to identify where there is a need.

"She has done wonderful work moving parish nursing forward in our region," Selmsler said.

"She is a leader and mentor for a number of graduate students and a role model for nurses in particular, who are going forth in leadership and administration.

"She brings blessings to the work she does and the people she meets because she cares. She wants to make a difference."

Helping women and children with La Salle is important to Skene.

"The work of the Grey Nuns was not only to continue, but to flourish. They feel that the only way to break the cycle of violence is to get to the children.

"One woman told us when her son began to demonstrate the behaviours of his father, she realized it was time to do something.

"I found that so profound."

Parish nursing

Skene hopes to advance parish nursing, where a registered nurse is hired by a parish and takes the lead in the spiritual dimension of care.

The nurse would connect people to the supports they need in the community, whether it be for the health of the body, mind or spirit.

The nurse might visit the elderly in their homes, run sessions in the parish or mobilize volunteers.

Skene said there are programs available for people to take in this field of health care.

"I would love to see that happen because part of what we do at CHAC is focus on the spiritual dimension.

"We need to have it actualized better at the parish level because a parish is already a defined community," Skene said.

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"To serve our readers by helping them deepen their faith through accurate information and reflective commentary on events and issues of concern to the church."