

R Western Catholic REPORTER

Canada's Largest Religious Weekly

Monday - 05/15/2006

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

Week of May 15, 2006

Search for:	<input type="text"/>
About	Go

ProLifeSearch

This Week's Paper

Fr. Ron Rolheiser

Scripture Readings

From the Archives

From the Bishops

Community Calendar

Catholic Links

Meet the Staff

Contact Us



Exploring the
Catholic Catechism

Healers follow Jesus' mission

Franciscan friar urges delegates to heal the health-care system too

By BILL GLEN
WCR Staff Writer
Edmonton



Dr. Daniel Sulmasy

To heal a person, one must first be a person. And to be a person is to follow the mission of Jesus.

"For us as Christians, serious reflection about health care and spirituality begins and ends with Jesus Christ - our Alpha and our Omega," Dr. Daniel Sulmasy told the nearly 300 delegates who attended the Catholic Health Association of Canada's annual convention May 5-7 in Edmonton.

Listen to Christ

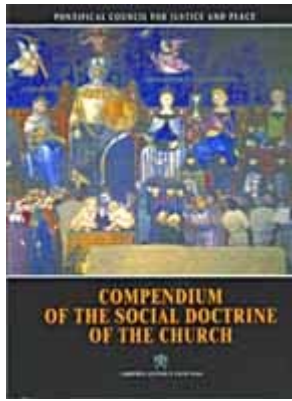
"Christ speaks to Christians in many ways, through the revelation of Scripture, the collective reflections of the believing Church, the sacraments and the experience of life itself. All of these are important listening posts for us - sources by which one can hear something about what Christ might be telling us about health care in the 21st century."

A Franciscan friar, Sulmasy is professor of medicine and director of the Bioethics Institute of New York Medical College. He is the author of *The Healer's Calling*, a book on spirituality for health care professionals.

His keynote address focused on helping the delegates rediscover and renew their sense of calling as Catholic health-care providers and the importance of nurturing and conveying those values to the community.

Sulmasy warned that people feel alienated when the mission of the founding sisters of Catholic health care in Canada is replaced with a focus solely on technology and efficiency to reduce costs.

"Precisely when one must remind lay Catholic health care professionals that their baptismal vows actually had to have meaning in the workplace, medicine itself seems most distant from anything that resembles spiritual."



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

Is health care, by its very nature, a spiritual discipline? Sulmasy said most people would agree that health care is the most delicate and intricate form of applied science. To feel a person's suffering is to sense the "cruel execution" of Jesus.

"If health care professionals are committed to healing patients as whole persons, then they must understand not only what disease and injury do to their patients' bodies but also what disease and injury do to them as embodied spiritual creatures grappling with transcendent questions," he said.

"Yet in the midst of all that is being written and said these days about spirituality and health care, isn't it surprising how little has been said about the spiritual lives of health care professionals?"

Steve Hill is director of mission for the Alberta Catholic Health Corp. Not all medical professionals who work in Catholic hospitals are Christian. Hill helps lay people to visualize how important they are to a patient's life and how they are fulfilling the mission of Jesus.

He says it is a privilege for him to remind people the work they do is continuing the work of Jesus. "It is sacred work and a noble calling. Whether they perform small, humble tasks or major things, they are all part of a community of care."

Christian healing

Sulmasy suggested Christian healing can be understood in three ways - as the restoration of right relationships, as encounter and as witness.

One element of the human body is in a relationship to another just as God is a relationship in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. For the Christian, healing is also a direct encounter with God. And healing as witness to God is to spread his word. This is what Jesus' disciples did, Sulmasy said.

All three happen simultaneously and inseparably every time a physician, nurse, psychologist or other health-care professional reaches out, in faith, to any one of God's children who is sick, he said.

"Among our major tasks in health care today is to rediscover a form of practice that can heal a health care system in just the same way. Our health-care system is sick, out of balance and fraught with distorted and bizarre relationships.

"Yet even in a depersonalized system of care such as our own, those who can see their service to the sick as ministry may finally become humble enough to recognize that they are not gods, and respectful enough of their patients to recognize in their patients the face of the divine."

Copyright © 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005 -- Western Catholic Reporter

The Mission of the Western Catholic Reporter is

"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."