

THE MISSION OF CATHOLIC HEALTH CARE
A RESPONSIBILITY OF THE WHOLE CHURCH

A PASTORAL MESSAGE ON CATHOLIC HEALTH CARE



Catholic Bishops of Saskatchewan

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Catholic health care ministry is
an activity of the whole church...
responding to human suffering
and caring for the well-being
of the whole person.

INTRODUCTION

A - OCCASION

We, your bishops and Father Abbot, take advantage of the 50th anniversary of the Catholic Health Association of Saskatchewan (CHAS) to send a message of gratitude, of hope and of encouragement as together we accept our common responsibility for the ministry of Catholic health care in our province.

B - AFFIRMATION

We offer sincere congratulations to and we affirm the Catholic Health Association of Saskatchewan for its generous and dynamic leadership and for the accomplishments of the past fifty years in the service of the Church.

Founded in 1943 to bond together and support Catholic institutions and the persons involved in health care, CHAS has grown from a very simple organization into the vibrant Association it is today. It speaks for the Church through its activities, its

programs, its publications and especially through its interventions on issues and concerns of health care in our province.

We thank the many generous people who have worked and continue to work with such dedication and competence, often in demanding and difficult situations. You serve the sick and the aged, not only in attending to physical illnesses, but also in caring for the well-being of the whole person.

It is important for us to recall the heroic generosity and selfless dedication of the many religious women and men who came to this province in its early days and, with the settlers, witnessed to the Gospel and shared Christ's compassion with those who were sick.

We also affirm the dedicated involvement of so many lay people: nurses, doctors, administrators, nursing assistants, aides, clerical and support staff, maintenance employees, board members, chaplains, pastoral workers, and countless volunteers.

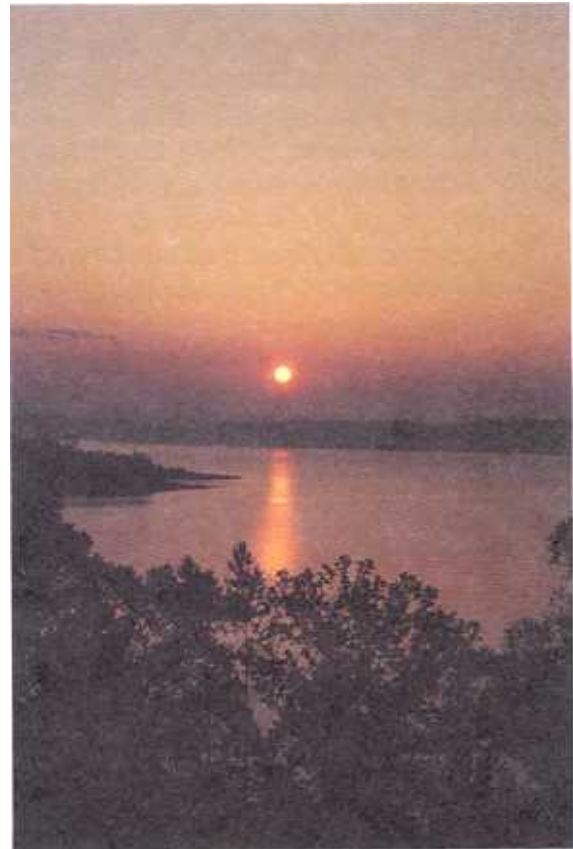
2.

We acknowledge with gratitude the personal contributions of patients, residents and families, who inspired by a deep sense of faith and commitment, have helped to develop and sustain the strong and dynamic network of Catholic health care we have today.

We admire all these tremendous efforts; and in the name of the Catholic community in Saskatchewan, we thank you most sincerely. We pray that on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of CHAS, God will bless, inspire and grace with the Holy Spirit, all those who serve in health care in our province.

C - PURPOSE

The purpose of this pastoral message is to bring to you a clear VISION of the ministry of Catholic health care; to invite you to reflect on its VALUES, and to urge you to share with the whole church the responsibility for its MISSION.



II CATHOLIC HEALTH CARE - ITS VISION

3.

The vision of Catholic health care in the life of the Church is rooted in the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ. In the Gospel of John, we find the purpose of Jesus' Mission succinctly stated: "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." (Jn. 10:10)

A - THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

When we look at the person of Jesus Christ, we are amazed at how often people were attracted by Jesus' compassionate care for the sick and the suffering. The gospels are filled with accounts of people waiting to be healed by Jesus. In fact, people came for all forms of help: freedom from demons, physical healing, blessing, acceptance, forgiveness. To all who came, Jesus gave help.

The Gospel of Matthew summarizes briefly the different ways by which Jesus fulfilled his mission:

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in

their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people. (Mt 4:23)

The healing ministry of Jesus was not just a question of showing compassion or performing miracles; it was a manifestation of God's love. The tender, sensitive healing activity of Jesus leaves no doubt that God reaches out to heal those who suffer.

B - THE EXPERIENCE OF SUFFERING

We are well aware that suffering involves much more than physical pain. Suffering extends to the whole human person, and affects the lives of those connected to the suffering person. It often affects a whole society.

Jesus, who reveals God's love for others in his compassion, experienced suffering himself and entered into its very depths. The Gospels tell us that Jesus knew intense suffering and knew it in all its aspects.



The letters of Paul provide us with an interpretation of the meaning of Jesus' suffering. We are told that Jesus suffered and died "for us," and that our suffering, joined with the suffering of Jesus, can be redemptive.

Our faith, then, does not offer us an answer to the problems of suffering and of death; but it offers us a possible response. It shows us a way to acceptance despite our attempts to deny and resist. It is important to remember that while suffering can be redemptive, it will always remain a mystery.

Acceptance of mystery does not imply a passive tolerance of suffering. Every society is bound to do all that is possible to eliminate the sources of suffering such as abuse, oppression and violence.¹

C - HEALTH CARE MINISTRY IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

If we accept that Jesus is the visible expression of God's love, then we, as

disciples of Jesus - the Church, are called and empowered by the Spirit to continue the healing mission of Jesus in Catholic health care.

As has been written in New Hope in Christ, a document of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops published in 1983:

Catholic health care facilities...fulfil a unique role in witnessing to the Christian attitude towards suffering and healing. Catholic institutions share goals similar to non-denominational health-care facilities. However, the institutional approach to the ministry of healing offers Catholics a privileged opportunity to supply the best possible care in a manner and atmosphere fully inspired by the Gospel and to work to exemplary standards of...care.²

The care given must be based on the Christian understanding that health includes "attention to the need for a balance of the biological, psychological, social and spiritual forces that interact within the person, the society and the ecosystem".³

The health care ministry of the Church is not the specialty only of the official caregivers. It is, in fact, the responsibility of all those who are disciples of Christ by baptism. Health care, in its many aspects, is a holy work! It truly is "participation in and continuation of a sacred, holy and healing presence of Jesus among all people".⁴

6 III - CATHOLIC HEALTH CARE - ITS VALUES

Fundamental to Catholic health care are the core values of its history and tradition.

A - DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON AND SANCTITY OF LIFE

We believe that human dignity and life are gifts from a loving Creator. We believe that all persons are created in the image and likeness of God, and are called to know, to love and to be in communion with God now and for all eternity. In Catholic health care, respect is due to every person from conception to death. Each person is to be provided with the health care needed, to the extent the mission and the resources of the facility will allow.

B - COMMUNITY SERVICE

Whatever its particular objectives, every Catholic health care institution aims primarily at the relief of suffering and the promotion of health. This leads to policies and programs that emphasize the care of people with acute or chronic illnesses. the prevention of disease

and the promotion of health. Such a perspective on health care, that includes promoting a healthy social and physical environment, demands collaboration among health care institutions and interactions between the health care system and other systems in society: education, housing, employment, religious bodies, professional organizations, and unions.⁵

It is important to note that each Catholic health care facility in the province was established because of a need existing in the community. It is likewise important to remember that decisions in health care, whether they concern the proper care of suffering persons, the purchase of equipment or a facility's expansion or closure, must always be viewed in terms of the community and its needs.

C - QUALITY OF SERVICE

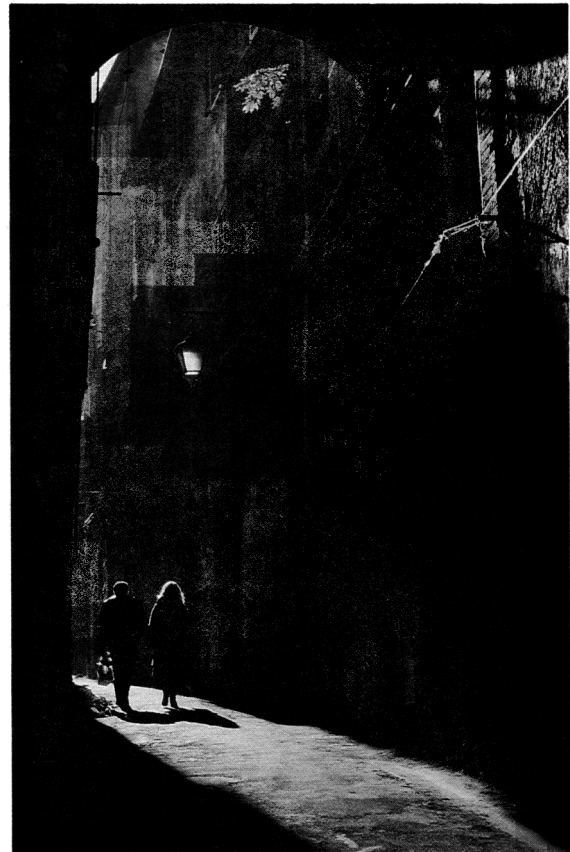
Sound professional practice, adequate technology, appropriate and caring administration and staff have to be focused on providing quality care for the whole

person. We must always remember that it is not sickness, but the sick person that is the recipient of our caring. This is why Catholic health care facilities must also be concerned about establishing and maintaining an atmosphere that promotes healing and a spirit of compassion, rooted in the healing mission of Christ.

D - WISE AND FAITHFUL STEWARDSHIP

Quality care demands a wise use of power and resources. It requires a stewardship of responsibility and accountability. This stewardship by those entrusted with the mission, while preserving the best of the present, must courageously face the future with its opportunities and its risks.

Institutions are to be committed to planning as a continuous and consultative process marked by adaptation to new advances and new needs as well as by constant reflection on the institution's mission. This shared involvement must also concern itself with the just and equitable allocation of resources.⁶



8.

E - ACCEPTANCE OF AND RESPECT FOR CATHOLIC ETHICAL GUIDELINES

Catholic health care facilities are required to function according to the ethical guidelines of the Church. "The Catholic moral tradition is the fruit of an ongoing dialogue between our understanding of human nature and our experience of God as revealed in Jesus Christ."⁷ Ethics is both a discipline and a process. It is a discipline in so far as it draws on a body of knowledge and ethical reflection that has developed and continues to develop throughout the history of Christianity. It is a process in that it makes use of a specific method in considering the various aspects in moral decision making.⁸

Christian health care ethics will relate also to corporate issues. Such issues are concerned with the functioning of the organization, the management style, the stewardship of resources, the provision of services and the choices for collaboration.

We strongly encourage all those involved in decision making in Catholic health care to

study attentively the Health Care Ethics Guide published in 1991 by the Catholic Health Association of Canada. This guide addresses many issues encountered by health care professionals.

IV - CATHOLIC HEALTH CARE - ITS MISSION

9.

In the last part of this message, we offer several suggestions for your consideration and action.

A - PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

As we noted earlier, health care is not just the duty of the specialists and professionals in the field; it is a ministry of the whole Church. Therefore, we encourage each individual to take seriously the responsibility of stewardship for personal health. Health is a gift of God that each person must respect. Personal responsibility for health is important, not only for one's own well-being, but also for the well-being of society for which we all share a common responsibility.

Even though we continue to benefit from a good system of publicly funded health care, everyone is called to use it responsibly.

B - INVOLVEMENT OF THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

Along with our personal responsibility as

Christians, we are called by our Baptism to share, according to our gifts and talents, in the care of the sick, the aged and the suffering.

As Catholics, we must be aware of the difficulties and threats facing Catholic health care in today's society. In the past, this ministry was carried on chiefly by religious congregations; but today, we realize that it is a ministry of the whole Church. Therefore, we must all be accurately informed. We must be willing to search for ways to continue the ministry of Catholic Health Care through the dedicated involvement of laity and religious as partners in ministry.

It is important for Catholics and Catholic organizations to explore ways to positively influence health care policies and planning and not allow competition, power or economic considerations only to determine such decisions. This is an appropriate time for us to rethink our responsibility so that Christian values will influence health care policies and decisions.

There must be strong support for Parish health care ministry that seeks to address both the spiritual and physical needs of the suffering person. Therefore, we encourage Parish Pastoral Councils to study the health care needs of their particular parish in order to make realistic plans that will ensure adequate pastoral support to the sick and the aged within the parish community. In this way, our sick and aged members, at home or confined to institutions are to know and experience the caring of the faith community.

In addition to those who serve the sick in institutional care, we recognize and encourage those who have made private family decisions to be caregivers within their own families for aged parents, a disadvantaged family member or loved one. We also commend those who extend their caring voluntarily into the wider community.

We also acknowledge those who provide care in public institutions. We encourage them to continue to seek ways to promote Christian values in the workplace.

Our settlers and founders had the vision and the courage to pioneer in Saskatchewan a health care system that has blazed the trail for many other systems. Today, we must continue that spirit of audacity and inventiveness and find ways to guarantee Catholic health care for future generations.

C - RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY OF CULTURE AND RELIGION

We encourage health care providers to treat each person with great respect according to their own cultural identity. To our aboriginal people, who profess their ancestral religion, as well as to people of other religions, we must show acceptance, understanding, concern and respect for their traditions and their spiritual insights. We must also encourage opportunities for ecumenical activity since we have a great deal to learn from each other. When joined in a caring ministry, we witness that God is one and cares for all.

D - ADVOCACY FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

One area that is fundamental to our way of living the Gospel is a strong commitment to social justice. In Catholic health care, issues of justice cannot be dismissed or relegated to second class concerns. This means that, since health care is a ministry of the Church, quality service and care must be offered to all, regardless of social or economic status. It also means that the policies of the institutions as well as the attitude of the staff should be inspired by basic Christian values.

In our modern society, people are very sensitive to their rights and it is important to respect them. But, it is also important that each person not only consider rights, but also the duties that accompany them. Rights by themselves do not create a just society.

The Church's social teaching calls for a constructive recognition by management and labour of their need for each other. All who serve the sick have an obligation to seek the common good. Inspired by the

vision, values and mission of Catholic health care, management and labour should share a common belief that together they can create those forms of collaboration that will most effectively serve the needs of the people.

E - THE NECESSITY FOR VOLUNTEERS

The Saskatchewan vision for health is shifting focus from the institution to a community based care model. This new focus will call our people to volunteer their time, talents and resources to those confined to their homes. This will provide an excellent opportunity for the sick and aged, as well as for those who care for them, to experience the warmth and the connectedness with their faith community.

In the past, much has been accomplished in health care through the dedication and commitment of volunteers. In the future, that dedication and commitment will be essential to maintain the quality of service that is inherent in our mission.

F - PROPOSAL TO OWNERS

As you strive to make the necessary adaptations required by the process of rationalization of health care services, we ask that you keep firmly before you the vision of Catholic health care as a ministry of the Church. In addition, we ask for vigilance in your responsibility to "manage the mission" within each facility in a way that reflects the particular spirit of the congregation or ownership group. Let us discover in the challenges before us new and creative ways to extend our ministry to the unmet needs of society.

G PROPOSAL TO CIVIL AUTHORITIES

Finally, as the Catholic Bishops of Saskatchewan, we encourage Government leaders, at all levels, to maintain, as a priority, adequate health care services for all citizens. It has been said that the quality of a civilization depends, above all, on the way the weaker and sick members of society are treated.

We are indeed pleased that the Minister of Health has implemented a framework for health reform based on the principles of consultation, collaboration and subsidiarity. This framework has the potential to empower the people to take appropriate responsibility for the health system.

We ask that the Department of Health ensure the preservation of denominational health care in our province. The denominational health care system provides a special quality of service that is a value for many of our people.

Since we share a deep concern for the poor and marginalized, we ask that immediate action be taken on issues that will have a positive impact for wellness in the lives of these people in our province.

V - CONCLUSION

13.



We realize that we have not covered every aspect of this wide and complex topic of health care. Our purpose was to affirm with deep gratitude and to encourage with genuine care all those dedicated to the ministry of Catholic health care.

We also wanted to encourage all our people to have a better understanding of the realities involved in Catholic health care and to take an active role in this church ministry because no one person, no single group, no association, "owns" this ministry. Its roots, its tradition and its values reside in the very mission of Jesus, the Son of God! It is truly God whom we serve in the sick and the aged, and it is with the attitude of Jesus that we are called to serve. "Truly, I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me." (Mt. 25:40)

Once again, we thank all those who are involved in the noble ministry of Catholic health care. We thank all those, who through their membership in CHAS, support the work of Catholic health care in our province.

14.

CHAS has chosen as a motto for its golden jubilee these words: OUR ROOTS: A PROMISE. As a province, we are indebted to those early pioneers who, with audacity and courage, provided Catholic health care to our people as early as 1860. The generosity, dedication and commitment of these women and men firmly rooted the ministry of Catholic health care in fertile soil and left to us, and the people of the 21st century, a promise rich in possibility and in hope.

May the Lord bless you with perseverance and dedication, with vision and courage.

+ *Charles D. Halpin*

Archbishop of Regina

+ *Basil Julevich*

Eparch of Saskatoon

+ *Amorand*

Bishop of Prince Albert

+ *James P. Mahoney*

Bishop of Saskatoon

+ *Peter Novocosky*

Abbot-Ordinary of Muenster

+ *Noël Héloquin*

Évêque de Gravelbourg

ENDNOTES

1. Casey, Juliana, IHM, Food For The Journey, pp 50-52
2. New Hope in Christ, #34, p. 22
3. Healthcare Leadership, Shaping a Tomorrow, p. xiv
4. Health Care Ethics Guide, #2, p. 21
5. Health Care Ethics Guide, #5, p. 22
6. Health Care Ethics Guide, p. 12
7. Healthcare Leadership Shaping a Tomorrow, p. 65

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