Catholic Health Care as a Ministry: Mission Impossible?

Fr. Charles Bouchard, O.P., S.T.D.
Senior Director, Theology and Ethics
Catholic Health Association
Basic Theological Questions

• What do we mean by “church?”
• What does it mean to say that Catholic health care is “faith based,” “church-related,” or that we “act in communion with the Church?”
• What is “ministry”? How is Catholic health care a ministry?
Will Our Ministries Just Fade Away?

There are “troubling questions as to whether these ministries can remain alive, vibrant and formative, given the powerful forces arrayed against it. (Our facilities may not close) but over time they may lose their religious character … ”

Bill Cox, “How to Sustain Catholic Health as a Ministry”
Why Are We in This to Start With?

Governance must be formed in the ‘why’ of mission if it is to be an effective force in the culture of Catholic health care. The ‘why’ of mission is the transcendent purpose, the greater good of God’s love and God’s healing presence that motivates and amplifies these ministries.

When trustees fail to understand the ‘why,’ lesser and more proximate goods will drive the engine of Catholic health care … ”

Kenneth Homan, “Formation and Governance”
A church is an “ekklesia” or a community of faith.

But faith communities “stand in the world” in different ways.
How a Church “Stands in the World”

• Ethical Imperialist
• Sectarian
• Accommodationist
The Catholic view

Persuasive Collaboration

We try to persuade others of the truth of our values;

But we are willing to collaborate for the sake of the common good
What Does it Mean to Say Catholic Health Care is a Ministry?
The Traditional View of Ministry
Dramatic Evolution in Our Understanding of “Ministry”

• Use of the generic term “ministry” is new to Catholics
• Use of “ministry” as applied to health care is even newer
• In both cases, theology has not kept up with usage
Ministry in General

- Having the recognized gift for ministry
- Doing something publicly on behalf of the Gospel (or to promote the Reign of God)
- Authorized by and in the name of the Church
Institutional Ministry as Incarnational

• “Central to the Catholic Christian view is the insistence that God relates to us and we to God through concrete communal experience in time and space. This is why institutionalization of the various aspects of the Church’s mission is necessary.”

• “To neglect institutions is a form of docetism.”

Michael Himes, “Church Institutions: A Theological Note”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ministry</th>
<th>Individual</th>
<th>Corporate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>One person designated to act on behalf of the church</td>
<td>A group organized around a particular apostolic work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>Directed <em>primarily inward</em>, toward sanctification and building up of church membership</td>
<td>External</td>
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“Internal” Ministry

Ministry directed primarily inward, toward the sanctification or building up of the community of believers itself (preaching, pastoral care, music, education)
“External” Ministry

- Directed primarily outward, to the world, for the common good and the Reign of God
- The common good foreshadows the Reign of God – it is a “sacrament” of the Reign of God
- Not all churches do this – only “public churches”
Beyond the “Seven”: Ministry as Sacramental

Sacrament: a tangible reality that mediates grace ("causes" God to be present here and now)
Identity and diversity:
Can we be who we are and still serve a diverse public?
What Counts as a Sacrament?

• **Jesus Christ** is the primary sacrament
• **Persons**, made in the image of God, are sacraments
• **Human actions** can be sacraments
• **The church** is a sacrament
• **Groups or communities** can be sacraments
• **Institutions** – even brick and mortar – can be sacramental
“Sacramentality also looks outward. It represents the mission and identity of Catholic health care.

In this representation it connects with Catholic social teaching and the Church’s responsibility to be a *transforming presence* in the community – a message that there is healing, that there is hope, that there is passion for justice … ”

Clark Cochrane, “Renewing the Sacramental”
If health care governance is unique, how do we prepare for it?
What Do We Mean by Formation?

“Formation” is a transformative process rooted in theology and spirituality which connects us more deeply with God, creation and others.

Through self-reflection it opens us to God’s action so that we derive meaning from the work we do, grow in awareness of our gifts, see our work as vocation, and build a communal commitment to the ministry of health care.
Formation is not conversion, evangelization or indoctrination.

It is an invitation to deepen one’s own spiritual awareness and to develop a personal spirituality as a resource for the ministry.
Deepening Your Vocation

- The place where your deep gladness meets the world’s need

  Parker Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak*

- Vocation as a “call to purpose”

- Vocation as an integrating principle: that around which I organize the rest of my life

- Vocation as a purposeful use of my gifts

- Vocation as God’s plan for me
Board Formation “Curriculum”
What Boards Need to Know Theologically

• Mission and Ministry of Jesus
• Health Care: Ministry or Business? (ecclesiology)
• Why Formation? Personally and Institutionally
• Catholic Social Teaching: Human Dignity and the Common Good; subsidiarity, solidarity, justice, work
• Ethical Foundations of Catholic Health Care
• Spirituality: Virtues for Governance
Personal Development Plan

• What gifts do I bring to ministry?
• What spiritual practices sustain me and enable my work?
• What are the key moments in my own spiritual development?
• How can I see governance as more than strategy, finance and compliance – or see those things as spiritual questions?
Board Formation – The Payoff

• Make board members’ work more satisfying and effective for the ministry by deepening spiritual awareness
• Acquire “theological fluency” and ability for “theological reflection”
• Bring board members “up to speed” with leadership formation that is already occurring for executive, senior and middle management leaders
• Enable board to be “leaven” that will enhance distinctiveness, strengthen the spiritual climate of the workplace and ultimately, provide a better patient experience
Institutional Culture

• “Culture” is a richer concept than merely “identity”
• Culture requires
  - **Content:** beliefs, values, norms
  - **Symbols:** “without expressive events, a culture will die”
  - **Actors**
The Board and Institutional Culture

• Culture must be *distinguishable* and *inheritable*
• Cultural actors
  - **Citizens:** live and process the culture
  - **Catalysts:** role models, knowledge experts and heroic figures who enable adaptation

From Melanie Morey and John Piderit, *Catholic Higher Education: A Culture in Crisis*