

NEW CHALLENGES AHEAD CARRY BIG IMPLICATIONS

This is the last time I will be writing this column in my role at CHA. On August 31, 2012, I will join the newly-formed Kentucky One Health System as regional vice president for mission integration. Kentucky One, a Catholic health care system, was formed in January 2012 as a subsidiary of Catholic Health Initiatives (CHI) in Englewood, Colo. Kentucky One's 11 hospitals are situated in Lexington, Louisville and several smaller towns in central and eastern Kentucky. These include Jewish Hospital in Louisville along with the other health facilities that are historically Catholic.



BRIAN
YANOFCHICK

You may recall that three Louisville hospitals — St. Mary's, Jewish Hospital and the University of Louisville Medical Center — were in the news in the latter part of 2011 as the community struggled with making the University of Louisville Hospital as part of Kentucky One. Just when it seemed everything was worked out, the governor of Kentucky announced after Christmas that he would not approve the inclusion of the university hospital in a Catholic hospital system. That decision turned on the governor's concern that, as part of a Catholic system, the university hospital would no longer provide certain reproductive health services.

With that process in mind, I would like to focus this column on some of the challenges I see embodied in systems such as Kentucky One and their implications for mission leadership across our ministry.

The Kentucky One model of blending Catholic and other-than-Catholic facilities into one system very likely represents the future of Catholic health care. This kind of partnership is a challenging but important strategy as health care in general adjusts to a constantly changing environment and increasingly stingy reimbursement models. We have been very used to a "Catholic only" environment for mission integration. This may change as more Catholic systems identify the need to partner with secular organizations to provide care that remains cost-effective and of high quality.

Partnerships of this type require careful consideration of the non-negotiable elements of Catholic identity and ethical concerns around

material cooperation. Much has already been written about these topics by other colleagues in the health ministry.

The partnerships also require a mission leader to think carefully about the shape of the desired culture in a blended organization and to invite other colleagues into that same process. What is it that we bring from our Catholic heritage that would be attractive and enlivening to a secular partner? Or, to flip a familiar question from the Gospel, who do we say we are? This question moves the mission leader and other executive leaders beyond the "do's" and "don'ts" of the *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services*, and it brings them to the document's deeper elements that help discern the unique Catholic contribution to the business of health care.

Answering this question — Who do we say we are? — is important before a Catholic institution seeks to create a partnership with a secular entity. While many business partnerships are forged out of very concrete business opportunities and financial considerations, the best work of financial wizards means little when organizational cultures clash and sap the energy and potential from a promising endeavor.

An organizational cultural assessment that leads to an intentional plan for a preferred culture is just as important as "crunching the numbers." The mission leader can shape a process of reflection that seeks to name the cultural strengths and key values that will help in the selection of appropriate business partners and that may guide the development of a new shared culture.

One source for shaping such a process is a new document published in March 2012 by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. Entitled "The

Vocation of the Business Leader — A Reflection,” the document seeks to describe a way to integrate values and faith into good business practices. It names a three-stage process of reflection:

■ **Seeing:** Analyzing our current environment in light of four signs of the times: globalization, communications technology, financialization of business and cultural changes. These four categories describe an environment of broad connectedness, tempered by concerns that business is slipping toward wealth maximization and short-term gains as guiding principles at the expense of the common good.

■ **Judging:** Shaping business decisions rooted in respect for human dignity and service for the common good. Good judgment is supported by a vision of business as a community of persons. Decisions focus on the production of goods that meet genuine human need, organizing work in a way that allows workers to flourish and participate in decision-making at appropriate levels and

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using resources that produce both profit and well-being — including the production of sustainable wealth, properly distributed through just wages for workers and just returns for owners.

■ **Acting:** Putting aspiration into practice so that business leaders integrate virtue and ethical social principles into their work. Practical wisdom allows the leader to shape his or her vision of work as a way to respond to a challenging environment and contribute to the common good.

A reflection process of this type moves our sense of mission to a new and deeper level that may help our work colleagues connect their own values to their work and identify how their work

contributes to a greater good beyond themselves. It can be inclusive of people from any faith background. Reflections guided by these categories may well help potential business partners learn more about one another and their priorities and also offer better ground for assessing the wisdom of future relationships.

This kind of work should not happen after the business arrangements are done and the mission leader is asked to “baptize” them as an afterthought. This kind of reflection is an important on-going process that shapes who we are as institutions and positions us to forge new relationships from a strong and balanced self-understanding.

I want to emphasize that while the mission leader could appropriately lead such a process, he or she may well find a natural partner in a human resources leader who also has the capacity to think strategically for the organization.

CHA will be offering a webinar on this important topic from 11:00 a.m. to noon CDT on Oct. 22, 2012, called “The Vocation of the Business Leader — A Reflection.” Watch for announcements coming soon, and encourage other leaders in your organization to take part.

As I conclude this column, I want to express my gratitude for the opportunity to serve in my role at CHA. Mission leadership is growing stronger across our ministry, and we are moving to a more common understanding of its essential role alongside other disciplines. While I will deeply miss the national scope of this work, I am looking forward to getting back into practice as a mission leader in an innovative system such as CHI.

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BRIAN YANOFCHICK, M.A., M.B.A., is regional vice president for mission integration, Kentucky One Health System, Louisville, Ky.

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