

Ministry Values in the Workplace

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Last fall St. Louis, the city where this journal is published, watched in fascination as one of its Catholic hospitals became the scene of an ultimately successful union-organizing drive by nurses. Of course, St. Louis was not unusual in that respect. Unions are an increasingly pressing concern in the ministry.

Our special section this month, entitled "Labor Issues in Catholic Health Care," naturally touches on the union question. Sr. Patricia Talone, RSM, PhD, traces the development of the Catholic Church's social teaching on workplace issues, especially in the 20th century. But labor issues include much more than labor organizations. Daniel O'Brien, PhD, and David Smith describe the efforts of Ascension Health, St. Louis, to base its human resources policies on the Catholic social teaching that Sr. Talone describes.

Jeffrey Hamlin discusses a paper developed by an ad hoc group of human resources executives on the concept of the "just wage." Susan McDonough writes about a campaign launched by New England-based Covenant Health Systems to recruit an ethnically diverse workforce to match the increasingly diverse populations the system serves. Sr. Talone, in a second article for this issue, tells the story of a Catholic health care system that, forced to "downsize" employees, nevertheless insisted on following its values in doing so.

IN THE WAKE OF SEPTEMBER 11

Rev. Michael D. Place, STD, the Catholic Health Association's president and chief executive officer, focuses in his column on the growing threat of bioterrorism. Observing that public health experts have begun to outline a comprehensive strategy for responding to possible bioterrorist attacks, Fr. Place says that the Catholic health ministry must participate in the ethical conversations underlying the strategy. What ethical criteria should be used to triage emergency treatment in a bioterrorism incident, for example? September 11, he notes, has caused Americans to look at health care in a whole new way.