



Terry Van Schaik
EDITOR

Had someone asked
Corrie and me what
was the culture of
Catholic health care,
we would have
probably stared
blankly at her and
shrugged. But I think
subconsciously we
knew the answer.

The Culture of Catholic Health Care

Reading Robert Porter's article, "The Essence of Catholic Health Care," and Ed Giganti's Final Say, "Raising Our Voices to Say Who We Are," led me, as it will many readers, to think about my first experience with Catholic health care. For me, the site was St. Elizabeth's Hospital—known in my hometown and among my family as St. E's—where as a high school senior I worked as an escort, a job that entailed taking patients from their beds to various departments within the hospital and back again. In between patients, I sat in central supply and folded sheets after tediously lifting lint and string from them with a hand-made masking-tape glove. I was lucky, though, to be working with a friend from my neighborhood, Corrie, and we often "escorted together" and shared books during the times when we had neither patients nor sheets to occupy us.

Two events I remember in particular. One morning Corrie and I had returned an elderly man on a gurney to his room. The staff on the floor had not had time to freshen his bed, and neither nurse nor aide was in sight. What to do? Return him to a rumpled bed, which was all that our job required of us, or go a step further and risk getting into trouble for overstepping our boundaries? The spirit of St. E's, probably augmented by the natural energy of young adults and a wish to show off our skills at mitering sheet corners and making a wrinkle-free bed, left us with no real choice. We found clean sheets and made his bed.

Another time Corrie and I made our first long walk to the psychiatric unit to escort a woman to another area of the hospital. We dreaded going through the locked double doors and worried about what we might find behind them. We found nothing out of the ordinary—just a woman about as old as our mothers who was ready to trust two teenagers with a wheelchair. Although awkward and unsure of ourselves, we knew our patient was a person more in need than we were, and in the spirit of St. E's, we gave her the level of care and comfort within our means: a lap blanket, a careful ride, and small talk.

Had someone asked Corrie and me what was the culture of Catholic health care, we would have probably stared blankly at her and shrugged. But I think subconsciously we knew the answer. I hope that the people I escorted knew and that as they grew older, and perhaps sicker, they continued to know the answer.

MORE TO COME

Readers of Diane Dixon's useful and informative article, "Leadership and Culture Alignment," will be pleased to know they will be able to obtain further coverage of culture and Catholic health care in a special section of the May/June 2001 issue of *Health Progress* and at the 86th Catholic Health Assembly in Atlanta, GA, June 10-13, 2001. The Assembly will focus on issues related to Catholic health care culture development and alignment.

A YEAR-END THANK YOU

With the final issue of 2000, we would like to thank the authors and reviewers who have assisted the journal, its readers, and the Catholic health ministry throughout the year by submitting their work to us and by critiquing the papers of their colleagues. We also thank those who have chosen *Health Progress* for advertising offerings of interest to our readers. Each group contributes significantly to the strength and continuance of the journal.