

# Revitalizing Our Vision

BY SR. RUTH MARIE NICKERSON, CSC

**A** day rarely passes without a news alert, phone call, e-mail, or meeting bringing additional news of the changes transforming healthcare delivery, both within and outside Catholic healthcare. Although these changes threaten and sometimes even destroy once stable working relationships, we must embrace them with hope and believe that God is in our midst and will be our guide.

In our darkest moments, we wonder when the turbulence will settle down and whether we will survive it. If we do survive, will our partners value our healing ministry? This transformation challenges us to reaffirm our commitment to live the Gospel values, ever mindful of the people we serve.

## CHAOS AND ORDER

Margaret J. Wheatley, EdD, president and cofounder of the Berkana Institute, turns to nature for insight into the forces that influence change in organizations. In her study of chaos theory, Wheatley proposes that chaos is order without predictability. She cites many examples from nature that appear chaotic when viewed in the short term, but reveal beautiful and organized patterns when studied in depth.

In healthcare today, chaos theory reassures us that we can learn from nature and recreate an organized healthcare system for the twenty-first century. To cope with chaos, Wheatley encourages us to step back, observe patterns, and gather as much information as we can, for information is the organizing force on which relationships are formed. When such system thinking takes place within the organization, a vision emerges that revitalizes and recreates the organization.

Unfortunately, it appears that the primary motivating force behind the new model of healthcare emerging in the United States is economic, rather than a desire to promote health and respect life. The managed care model challenges the values, governance structures, and safeguards that have worked so well for Catholic healthcare in the past.



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Now we must design new pathways that align incentives without forfeiting our mission. Our mission is clear, but our vision needs to be revitalized. As in the cycle of life—birth, maturity, diminishment, and rebirth—we appear to be passing through the diminishment/rebirth phase. Pain exists, but hope is emerging.

## A VISION FROM WITHIN

In the year ahead, the Catholic Health Association's board and staff hope to find new and creative ways to revitalize our vision. CHA will look for opportunities for members to share information, discern patterns and trends, propose strategies for responding to needs, and build supportive relationships so that a revitalized vision emerges from within.

In addition, CHA will continue its service to members through service departments and board committees. CHA will emphasize continued dialogue with the Church leadership while continuing to work with the National Coalition on Catholic Health Care Ministry in discerning ministry directions for the future.

Further development and implementation of healthier communities initiatives are also planned. The Washington, DC, office will promote values consistent with the ministry in policy development, especially in a case statement for not-for-profits and CHA's position on the proposed Medicare and Medicaid budget cuts. IDN Services will support members' work in developing strategic alliances and collaborative partnerships. The Center for Leadership Excellence as a collaborative venture will become a reality.

## OUTSIDE THE LINES

Our mission is bigger than any one of us, and it will take all of us to meet the challenges of these times. As CHA members, we may need to learn to color outside the existing lines or even draw new ones, as we strive to promote the health of our communities and dare to be God's compassion in the world. □