

# Mission: A Light To Our Path

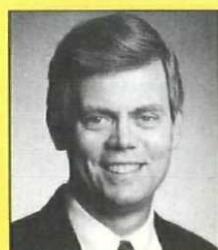
BY BILL SCHOENHARD

**T**he buzzword in healthcare these days is *change*. The current healthcare environment, awash with integrations, mergers, and reengineering efforts, creates uncertainty for all of us in Catholic healthcare. How do we continue to keep our patients healthy and maintain a healthy bottom line? How do we form the most effective partnerships? How do we care for vulnerable people in a society that values individualism over the common good? In short, how do we keep pace with change while remaining true to our mission?

If we are to successfully find our way through this chaotic environment, our Catholic values and beliefs must be both a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. Our mission must guide us, as we evaluate options and make difficult decisions, from capital allocations and resource investments to new business ventures and collaborations.

Any institution, regardless of its religious or secular nature, has a mission, and even the popular business press emphasizes the value of focusing on these core beliefs. In their book *Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies*, authors James Collins and Jerry Porras (HarperCollins, New York City, 1997) describe their study of 18 "visionary" companies. They note that companies that enjoy enduring success have core values and a core purpose that remain fixed, while their business strategies and practices endlessly adapt to a changing world.

Our mission statements express clearly the "why" of our existence and the "who" of our service. They are rooted in the heritage of our health ministries and affirm our commitment and fidelity to Catholic healthcare. In considering their relevance for the future, we need to critically examine how they come to life within our organizations and how they give life to each of us, to people serving and people being served.



*Mr. Schoenhard is executive vice president/chief operating officer, SSM Health Care, St. Louis.*

## MISSION FLOWS FROM THE TOP DOWN

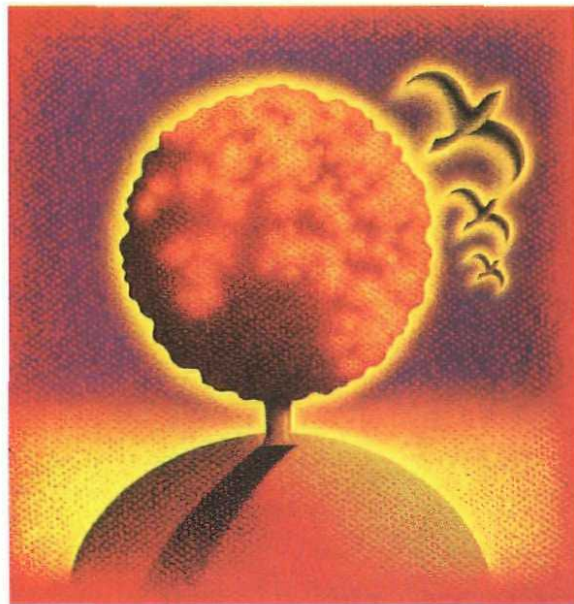
Bringing our mission to life and making it an integral part of all we do throughout our organizations begins at the top. As leaders, we must make mission the core motivation for the work we do. In fact, we should view ourselves as the "caretakers" of the mission, with the chief executive officer serving as chief mission officer of the facility or system.

A good example of this type of leadership can be seen in St. Mary's—Good Samaritan, Inc. When Chicago-based Felician Services, Inc., and St. Louis-based SSM Health Care signed a joint operating agreement in 1996 to integrate the healthcare services of St. Mary's Hospital in Centralia, IL, and Good Samaritan Regional Health Center in Mount Vernon, IL, many observers were skeptical of the venture's success. The agreement marked a major step in improving access to healthcare for the 300,000 residents of southern Illinois, but it called for two traditional competitors to work together as a single organization.

The "virtual merger"—one of only a few of its type in the country—allowed the two hospitals to plan together, create a single operating budget, and share services without combining financial assets or changing sponsorship. Previously the facilities had been rivals, but now they needed to act as a team.

The first priority for Sr. Clarette Stryzewski, CSSF, president/CEO of Felician Services, Inc., and Sr. Mary Jean Ryan, FSM, president/CEO of SSM Health Care, was to begin integrating the cultures and missions of the two hospitals to reflect their common values. Jim McDowell, president of St. Mary's Hospital, and Leo Childers, president of Good Samaritan Regional Health Center, led this gradual transition and involved employees in creating a joint mission statement for

*Continued on page 71*



## FINAL SAY

Continued from page 72

# Our Catholic mission is our core ideology.

the organizations. As they worked to shape the mission statement, employees were struck by how much they had in common, and they concentrated on strengthening the common Catholic values that molded their idea of what healthcare should be.

Under the leadership of Childers, McDowell, and Jim Sanger, president/CEO of St. Mary's-Good Samaritan, Inc., the joint operating agreement has been a balancing act, as each facility has adapted to being part of a larger organization. But an emphasis on their shared values and common mission has enabled the formerly competing facilities to build a strong healthcare network that benefits the community.

### MISSION IS THE KEY

In *Built to Last*, Collins and Porras describe highly successful companies that have identified their core ideology and refuse to compromise it, even in times when their organizations struggle to survive. Ralph Larsen, chairman/CEO of Johnson & Johnson, says his company established a set of core values because "they define for us what we stand for, and we would hold them even if they became a competitive disadvantage in certain situations" (Collins and Porras, p. 222). This is sound advice for all of us in Catholic healthcare. We must view our Catholic mission as our core ideology that absolutely will not change.

As we in Catholic healthcare seek to preserve our mission for its indispensable contribution to society, we should draw strength from the examples set by the organizations Collins and Porras studied. These companies have thrived despite much change by remaining faithful to their core purpose. We must do the same. □

## Basic and Advanced Units of Clinical Pastoral Education offered by Bon Secours-St. Francis Hospital in Charleston, South Carolina

The ecumenical training program is NACC/ACPE accredited. Stipend position with benefits available.

**Fall 1998-** September 8, 1998 to November 18, 1998

**Winter 1998-** November 30, 1998 to February 24, 1999

**Spring 1999-** March 8, 1999 to May 19, 1999

**Summer 1999-** June 7, 1999 to August 18, 1999

**Extended Unit-** 22 weeks beginning September 1998, as arranged

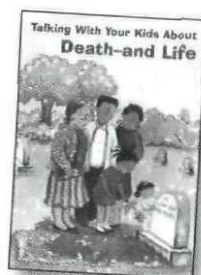
**For information about the Clinical Pastoral Education Program contact Sister Gemma Neville, Director of Pastoral Services, at (843) 402-1124 or fax (843) 402-1052.**



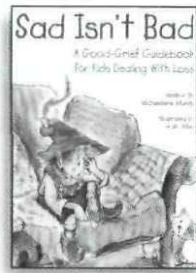
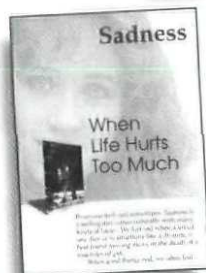
**BON SECOURS  
ST. FRANCIS HOSPITAL**  
Bon Secours Health System

## THE SIMPLE Care NECESSITIES

**CareNotes**  
(Over 50 million sold!)



**Talking with Your Kids** (New!)



**CareNotes for Teens and Kids** (Indispensable!)

Now provided at over 10,000 caring places like yours



Call or write for our FREE "Care Variety Pack #26716"

**1-800-325-2511** Abbey Press Dept. P8XG, St. Meinrad, IN 47577