



ORGANIZATIONAL ETHICS

IN THE WORLD OF HEALTH CARE, ethics is usually associated with difficult medical decisions in areas like reproduction, care at the beginning of life, use of medical technologies, patient privacy, and end-of-life care. And though the word *ethics* typically conjures up images of moral debates around clinical issues, it is bigger than this. Ethics is concerned not just with the direct medical care of patients but with all aspects of a health care organization's life.

This is especially the case for Catholic health care, which, as Jack Gallagher, PhD, points out (pp. 18-23), is deeply concerned with mission. The goal for ministry organizations, therefore, is to live out this mission in every facet of the organization. This is the stuff of organizational ethics. According to Philip Boyle, PhD, organizational ethics examines how an institution "ethically structures itself through its policies and practices, and explores the informal culture that . . . promotes or degrades its values across all aspects of its operation" (p. 29).

The articles in this special section look at organizational ethics from two distinct yet interdependent angles, the theoretical and the practical. First we learn *why* organizational ethics is important, and then we learn *how* to employ organizational ethics toward the fulfillment of our missions.