

Called to Lead at Ascension Health

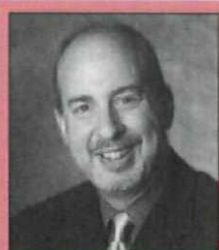
BY ED GIGANTI

This February, Ascension Health, St. Louis, will initiate a new program of formation for executive leaders in the ministry. The national system has partnered with Aquinas Institute of Theology, St. Louis, to develop the two-year program, which is called "Formation for Catholic Healthcare Ministry Leadership." I spoke with Sr. Maureen McGuire, DC, senior vice president for mission integration at Ascension Health, to learn more about this system's approach to forming leaders.

"The Ascension Health board and sponsors place great priority on the formation of leaders for the future," Sr. Maureen told me. "With this new program, we are targeting the next generation of leaders and helping them prepare with knowledge of the Catholic theological tradition and spiritual formation for the sake of leadership effectiveness in the health ministry."

The goal of the program is to develop a community of leaders who are deeply grounded in personal spirituality for service, equipped with theological and ethical foundations needed to assume a public leadership role in the ministry, and able to integrate these in an inspirational, compelling leadership style. "People come to leadership roles with their own gifts, their own spirituality, their own religious traditions, their own knowledge base," Sr. Maureen said. "When they assume a public leadership role in a health care ministry of the church, we want to support them in such a way that they know they are well equipped with an integral body of knowledge and a framework of service to sustain their own spiritual journey over time."

The program is based on a "distance learning community" model. In February, 25 people from across the system will begin with a four-day retreat and introduction in St. Louis. Then, for the next 18 months, they will participate in a series of 10-week online courses (see **Box**). During each course, participants will come to St. Louis for a two-day integrating retreat. After completing the courses, participants will spend six months work-



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ing on an integration experience in their local health ministry. The program will conclude with participants coming together in St. Louis for a final session of closure and commissioning. The Aquinas Institute will issue a certificate of achievement to people who successfully complete the program. Each year, the program will introduce a new group of 25 participants.

Sr. Maureen said the retreats are an important element of the program. "At the introductory retreat, we will outline the overall purpose and how the components of the program fit together. We will also explore together some constructs for understanding spirituality and the adult spiritual journey. Participants will have the opportunity to weave new learnings with their own inner growth and examine how all this comes together in ministry. Then, the two-day retreats will continue the ongoing integration of theology, spirituality, and leadership. These retreats will provide opportunities for the participants to interact with the course faculty and to build community with one another."

Another important dimension of the program is matching participants with spiritual directors or mentors, who will assist them in their spiritual growth. "We will offer the participants the opportunity to select mentors or spiritual directors from within and outside of Ascension Health," Sr. Maureen said. "The intent is to augment the group's experience of spirituality and to create personal, individual conversations about the meaning of what the participants are experiencing in the program and in their ministry."

As they engage with the program, individuals will complete assessments that will link them to the system's Leadership Continuity Program, which is aimed at identifying and developing people for future leadership roles. Sr. Maureen said that although the program is intended to prepare future executive leaders (it is primarily targeted to vice presidents and middle managers), not all participants may be focusing on career progression. The program is also open to

those already in leadership roles within the system who may want to deepen their spirituality and expand their knowledge.

People may nominate themselves or be nominated for participation. They must have the support of their organization's CEO and mission vice president, as well as that of their immediate supervisor.

Sr. Maureen said that, "in conceptualizing the program, it became evident that there was an affinity with the approaches used in the Aquinas Institute's master's degree program in health care mission. Ascension Health values and participates in the Aquinas master's program. At the same time, we sought to team with Aquinas' significant capability to create a new model to meet a different set of specific leadership formation needs." Aquinas is providing most of the faculty for the courses, but Ascension Health's ethicists, Daniel O'Brien, PhD, and John Paul Slosar, PhD, will teach the ethics courses.

Bill Brinkmann joined Ascension Health on October 28, 2003, as director of leadership formation. He will coordinate the program, collaborate with Aquinas in the online course, implement the series of spiritual retreats, and engage partici-



pants in designing their integration projects. "We will collaborate with the participants to help us evolve the program and refine our approach, always ensuring that it is relevant to the needs of the health care ministry," Brinkmann said. He was formerly employed by the Sisters of Mercy Health System, St. Louis, where he helped to develop the Mercy Leadership Pathways program.

Hopeful that there will be more candidates interested in the program than can be accommodated in the first year, Sr. Maureen anticipated enrolling them in the next group of 25. "We hope it will be something people want to get into," she said. "We believe leaders will see great value in this program. We have strong support from the CEOs of our ministries.

"The Formation for Catholic Healthcare Ministry Leadership program came as a result of our review of the needs for ministry leaders," she continued. "It is a significant investment within Catholic health care in our leaders, in our ministry, and in our future."

For more information on the Formation for Catholic Healthcare Ministry Leadership program at Ascension Health, contact Bill Brinkmann at wbrinkmann@ascensionhealth.org.

Ascension Health's Online Courses

Leaders in the Ascension Health Formation for Catholic Healthcare Ministry Leadership program will participate in these six 10-week, online courses:

- *Foundational Theology: Knowing the God Who Calls Us to Serve* This course will address basic questions about God and the human person. In ecumenical, interfaith dialogues, participants will discuss their own faith traditions and concepts of God and how these affect their personal spirituality.

- *Christ and the Church: Models of the Church; Implications for Leaders* Participants in this course will learn about theological foundations of the Roman Catholic Church and the church's self-understanding as a community of believers in Christ. They will examine various models of the church, elements of Catholic identity, and the relationships between health care leaders and the institutional church.

- *Theology of Ministry* This course will consider health care as a ministry and the personal call to serve. In addition to the meaning of "ministry," the course will explore contemporary thought on servant leadership.

- *Catholic Social Teaching—the Transformational Church* Principles of Catholic social teaching will be addressed and applied in case studies and applications relevant to the participants' own organizations.

- *Ethics—Part 1: Foundations, Concepts, and Principles* This course will introduce basic moral methodology and principles, Catholic moral teaching, the *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services*, and decision-making approaches.

- *Ethics—Part 2: Practical Considerations* Participants will learn Ascension Health's ethical discernment process by applying it in actual situations.

LEADERSHIP PILGRIMAGE

Elsewhere in Ascension Health, the Seton Cove in Austin, TX, part of the Seton Health Care Network, begins its first Leadership Pilgrimage, "Revitalizing the Practice of Leadership," in February. This program of three two-and-a-half-day retreats (over one year) is designed to help leaders reflect on their work, renew their spirits, and revitalize their understanding and practice of leadership.

"Our whole focus is leadership formation," Patty Speier told me. She is director of Seton Cove and a spiritual director and former teacher. She developed the Leadership Pilgrimage program with Seton Cove's Anne Province and Russ Moxley, author of *Leadership and Spirit: Breathing New Vitality into Individuals and Organizations* (Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 1999) and former senior fellow at the Center for Creative Leadership, Greensboro, NC.

"How do we lead from within? How do we take the time to really examine our deepest, truest values in relation to our leadership?" Speier asked. "The Leadership Pilgrimage really is a program that provides a 'container' for participants to go deeply into their own centers and revitalize their sense of purpose and meaning.

"We call it a pilgrimage because the pilgrim is always in search of the sacred, the meaning and purpose in life," she continued. "A pilgrimage is

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MINISTRY LEADERSHIP

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always transformative in some way. In our pilgrimage, we will be emphasizing the themes of openness, attentiveness, and responsiveness, strengthening these characteristics for leadership." Speier said that during the retreats, participants will work with poetry and wisdom stories as an entry point to examining leadership. "We will give them some food for thought, questions to think about, and ways to process them such as silent reflection, Tai Chi, a process of structured dialogue and silence in triad groups known as 'the power of threes,' and peaceful walks in nature."

Also, during the retreats, participants will work with concepts about relationship and open dialogue from Margaret Wheatley's book, *Turning to One Another: Simple Conversations to Restore Hope to the Future* (Berrett-Koehler, San Francisco, 2002). Speier said the pilgrimage will focus on the self-awareness that is necessary for a leader to be in right relationship with self, others, creation, and the sacred. "Personal transformation may lead to community transformation and even global transformation," she said.

Dates for the 2004 Leadership Pilgrimage retreats are February 26-28, June 3-5, and September 30-October 2. All the retreats will be held at the Canyon of the Eagles Resort and Retreat Center just outside Austin. The fee for the entire program, inclusive of room and board, is \$3,000 per person. For more details and to register, contact Speier at pspeier@seton.org.

PATHWAY TO FRANCISCAN EXCELLENCE

The Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady (FMOL) Health System in Baton Rouge, LA, has implemented a new approach to developing leadership throughout its workforce. On page 49 of this issue of *Health Progress*, FMOL Health System President and CEO John J. Finan, Jr., the system's vice president for health ministry, Cindy Heine, and its sponsor, Sr. Barbara Arcenaux, OSF, describe the process of creating "My Pathway to Franciscan Excellence." □

CALL CARE PROJECT

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- Continue to seek feedback from the population served regarding changing service needs and recommendations for addressing them

CALL CARE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Although the 11 CALL Care sites faced some challenges as they developed their programs and recruited participants for them, they succeeded in improving coordinated care for the people enrolled. The participating organizations:

- Identified appropriate patients and referred them to the service
- Made more frequent hospice referrals
- Managed symptoms well over time
- Continued to build the infrastructure for excellent palliative care
- Formed partnerships and networks in the community to work for better care
- Provided care that may have helped preclude crisis events and inappropriate and expensive hospitalizations

By working to carry out the healing ministry of Jesus, CALL Care represents a visible statement of Catholic identity in health care. People served by the Catholic health care ministry should expect no less: care that honors their lives and their human dignity and strives to comfort and heal even when cure is not possible. □

NOTES

1. U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services*, Introduction to Part Five, Washington, DC, 2001, p. 29.
2. Last Acts, *Means to a Better End: A Report on Dying in America Today*, 2002, which can be found at www.lastacts.org/scripts/la_tsk01.exe?FNC=BetterEndHome_Ala_newtsk_laxlike.html.
3. The questionnaire can be seen at www.careofdying.org/default.asp?goto=Tools/family_quest2001.html.
4. Last Acts.
5. J. D. Lubitz and G. F. Riley, "Trends in Medicare Payments in the Last Years of Life," *New England Journal of Medicine*, vol. 328, no. 15, April 15, 1993, pp. 1,092-1,096.
6. Last Acts.
7. Last Acts.
8. Last Acts.



A Shared Statement of Identity For the Catholic Health Ministry

We are the people of Catholic health care, a ministry of the church continuing Jesus' mission of love and healing today. As provider, employer, advocate, citizen—bringing together people of diverse faiths and backgrounds—our ministry is an enduring sign of health care rooted in our belief that every person is a treasure, every life a sacred gift, every human being a unity of body, mind, and spirit.

We work to bring alive the Gospel vision of justice and peace. We answer God's call to foster healing, act with compassion, and promote wellness for all persons and communities, with special attention to our neighbors who are poor, underserved, and most vulnerable. By our service, we strive to transform hurt into hope. ✎

As the church's ministry of health care, we commit to:

- Promote and Defend Human Dignity
- Attend to the Whole Person
- Care for Poor and Vulnerable Persons
- Promote the Common Good
- Act on Behalf of Justice
- Steward Resources
- Act in Communion with the Church