

Ministry Leaders as Spiritual Leaders

BY MARY KATHRYN GRANT, PhD

Enter any bookstore today and you will find an extensive collection of books, tapes, and other resources on the mind, body, and spirit as well as an equally burgeoning collection on workplace spirituality. This growing emphasis on spirituality of all forms is hardly surprising. It is a likely response to the current phenomena of “workplace rage” and “cube combat,” the professional expectations of Gen X and NeXters, and women’s continued exodus from the work force (e.g., the growing nursing shortage).

The connection between the workplace and spirituality—or for those of us in Catholic health care, between *ministry* and spirituality—underscores the relationship between leadership and spirituality. But often the question is posed: how do I connect *spirituality*—my personal, non-office, private self—and *ministry*—my public, workplace or marketplace self?

The relationship between ministry leadership and spirituality is strong and deep. *Ministry* can be defined as the performance of the works of mercy—works of justice, compassion, right relationships, and service. *Spirituality* can be defined as the search for meaning and purpose, belonging to something or Someone greater than ourselves. For those of us in Catholic health care, these two realities intersect most profoundly in the workplace.

In the Catholic health ministry, the role of leader has a unique requirement differentiating it from comparable roles in any other health care sector. That role is to be a spiritual leader within the organization. Never before has this dimension of leadership been more imperative than today. With changes in sponsorship, the diminishing presence and participation of women and men religious, and draconian economic forces in play, the need for and expectation that those in leadership positions be moral and spiritual leaders within their organizations is continually being reinforced.

The demand for information on workplace spirituality should not be new or faddish to Catholic health care. From the beginnings of our



*Dr. Grant is
executive director,
Ministry
Leadership
Development,
Catholic Health
Association,
St. Louis.*

ministry of care to the outcast, the dying, the indigent, and neglected, the inspiration and dedication for service has been the Gospel—specifically the spiritual and corporal works of mercy.

But what does it really mean to be a spiritual leader? How can we recognize and cultivate the behaviors and competencies of spiritual leadership? Although spiritual leadership can be developed in many ways, I will describe four important elements here: interiority, interdependence, integration, and integrity.

INTERIORITY

Interiority is the inner quality of centeredness, spiritual grounding, and living one’s values and faith tradition every day.* Its outward manifestations are peacefulness, self-confidence, resilience, and adaptability. Practices that enable interiority are spiritual reading; personal prayer; an attitude of self-reflection; and the habit of taking a few minutes out of each day to be with oneself, away from computers and e-mail, pagers and beepers, cell phones and faxes.

INTERDEPENDENCE

Interdependence, a second characteristic of workplace spirituality leaders, is the conscious creation of community in an organization. This concept is characterized by mutuality: relying on others and being relied on by others and holding members accountable—as well as being accountable oneself—for the spirit and spirituality of the organization. This is no easy task. Interdependence is typified by a deep respect for, appreciation of, and drawing out of the unique and irreplaceable contribution each person makes to the ministry.

INTEGRATION

A third characteristic, integration of ministry values, calls for the alignment of intention, word, and deed

Continued on page 46

*Spiritual grounding, integrity, and integration of ministry values are among the competencies in the Catholic Health Association’s Mission Leadership Model.

Join Consorta, and you'll become a whale.

As a member of a Group Purchasing Organization, you should enjoy more than guppie status. That's why at Consorta, your voice will be heard. Your opinions will count. You'll play a big part in shaping our policies for determining how to keep all our members' costs for hospital supplies as low as possible. And how to keep their investment returns as high as possible. Which isn't just a lot of blubber.



CONSORTA

Catholic Resource Partners

Your vision demands our values.

3701 Algonquin Road, Suite 550
Rolling Meadows, IL 60008

800•342•5333

www.consorta.com

MINISTRY LEADERSHIP

Continued from page 8

Becoming a spiritual leader is not easy but is worth the journey.

with the publicly espoused mission and values of the organization—both in the person of the leader and in the actions of the organization. Mission-based decision-making in matters both large and small, institutional and individual, nurtures organizational integrity and alignment.

INTEGRITY

Integrity, the final characteristic, is perhaps the highest form of unity of self: acting consistently from one's center and uniting motivation, meaning, and purpose with actions and decisions. This is the wholeness of person we all seek, the combination of our public self and private self in the person who is a spiritual leader.

How are these four characteristics manifested? Ministry leaders must first accept the spiritual dimension of their role. The potential leader must be willing to be a *public* spiritual leader within the organization. He or she must model, speak, and be accountable and hold others accountable for public practice of certain individual behaviors and the conduct of business.

The spiritual leader is one who inspires trust, is vulnerable, thoughtful, and trusting. Becoming a spiritual leader is not easy but is worth the journey to inward wholeness and the integration of spirituality and work as a leader within the ministry. □

The Ministry Leadership column is intended to evoke response, debate, and dialogue. Positive and negative reactions to this column are welcomed and invited, as are topics for further consideration. Please address all correspondence to the editor, Terry Van Schaik, at tvanschaik@chausa.org.

JOURNAL OF THE CATHOLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES

www.chausa.org

HEALTH PROGRESS®

Reprinted from *Health Progress*, May-June 2001
Copyright © 2001 by The Catholic Health Association of the United States
