



SPIRITUALITY FOR LAY LEADERS

In 1989 the leaders of Daughters of Charity National Health System—East Central Region (DCNHS-EC), Evansville, IN, became interested in exploring the underlying spirituality of the healthcare ministry in the region. Although the system's leaders had established a mission services department in each of DCNHS-EC's 10 hospitals, they had put little emphasis on the spirituality of the Vincentian tradition. They worried that some in the ministry were learning to use its "mission and values" language without understanding the spiritual motivation behind it.

To approach an understanding of spirituality, DCNHS-EC initiated a year-long study process in which key leaders would study spirituality and the elements that make up spiritual formation, or nurturance.

THE STUDY PROCESS

The study group's participants included 25 persons representing DCNHS-EC's management: the system's regional board; board chairpersons; CEOs; chief operating officers; and vice presidents of planning, nursing, human resources, and mission services. Also participating were representatives of DCNHS's East Coast, West Coast, and St. Louis regions and its social service and

*System
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education ministries. Some participants were Catholic; others came from Jewish or Protestant faith traditions. Because of this diversity, the leaders knew the terms the group used to communicate key spiritual concepts would be an important

Summary In 1989 the leaders of Daughters of Charity National Health System—East Central Region (DCNHS-EC) decided to explore their 10 facilities' underlying spirituality. A study group made up of top DCNHS-EC management and representatives of other DCNHS regions and ministries met quarterly for a year to discuss four topics:

- The distinction between "spirituality" and "religion"
- The difference between "human development" and "human formation"
- The primacy, in contemporary Western culture, of the "functional" dimension of human life over the "transcendent" dimension
- The importance of "beholding the Mystery" of life, rather than trying to control or manipulate it

In 1990, at the end of their sessions, the group's participants published *Spirituality and Spiritual Formation*, a document summing up what they had learned. The leaders of each DCNHS-EC facility were urged to understand and support the document; the vice presidents for mission services were especially encouraged to integrate spirituality and spiritual formation in their work.

Over the past seven years, the DCNHS-EC facilities have integrated spirituality in the workplace by emphasizing such events and activities as spirituality committees, retreats, renewal days, and pilgrimages. In September, St. Vincent Hospitals and Health Services, Indianapolis, broke ground for a spirituality center for its associates, medical staff, volunteers, and benefactors and the members of their families.



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consideration. They hoped to find language that was relatively universal and not tied to a particular faith tradition.

The study process, facilitated by Rev. Adrian van Kamm, CSSp, PhD, and Susan Muto, PhD, cofounders of the Epiphany Lay Ecumenical Association, consisted of two-day sessions held each quarter. In each session, the facilitators would first introduce a topic concerning some aspect of spirituality and then ask participants to discuss it from their professional perspectives. The facilitators also assigned participants books to read and reflect on between sessions.

KEY AREAS OF DISCUSSION

Guided by the facilitators, the study group participants discussed four key topics:

- The distinction between “spirituality” and “religion.”
- The difference between “human development” and “human formation.” (“Human development” is the process through which a person aims at and achieves goals; “human formation” is the process through which talents, traits, beliefs, and so forth unfold from a person’s interior.)
- The primacy, in contemporary Western culture, of the “functional” (or productivity-oriented) dimension of human life over the “transcendent” (or aspirational and inspirational) dimension, especially in the workplace.
- The importance of “beholding the Mystery” at the center of all life, rather than attempting to control or manipulate it. (In the former, life is seen as a mystery to be beheld; in the latter, it is seen as a problem for people to solve.)

THE STUDY GROUP’S REPORT

In December 1990, at the end of their sessions, the participants published a 10-page document called *Spirituality and Spiritual Formation: Final Report of the Spiritual Formation Study Group*, in which they summed up what they had learned.

Spirituality and Spiritual Formation “*Spirituality*,” the participants wrote, “unfolds our awareness of God’s presence in our life and world; reflects our ongoing relationship with God; integrates our life’s choices, daily interactions, and decisions; and shows in the way we live our lives. *Spiritual formation* is the ongoing process of developing more fully an openness and responsiveness to God in our lives, at home, at work, and in the community.”¹

Guiding Principles and Goals The participants identified 10 principles underlying a study process. The group said that a spiritually formative study process should aim to:

- Promote the wholeness of the person—body,

Participants discussed the distinction between “spirituality” and “religion.”

mind, and spirit

- Recognize that spiritual formation is an ongoing (and graced) activity, always open to improvement and change
 - Respect people of all religions, cultures, and formation traditions
 - Focus on ordinary life examples and respect for the individual
 - Interact in a personal way
 - Promote balance between the needs of the individual and those of the organization
 - Promote growth of each person’s potential, gifts, and unique talents
 - Respect and present the teachings and traditions of the Catholic Church as related to our service
 - Reflect the traditions and Vincentian charism of the Daughters of Charity
 - Include both laity and Daughters of Charity²
- The participants also identified four goals for

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KEY ELEMENTS ARE ADOPTED BY MISSION AND MENTORING PROGRAM

Recently St. Vincent Hospitals and Health Services, a DCNHS-EC organization in Indianapolis, has made *Spirituality and Spiritual Formation*’s eight key elements of the spiritual formation process part of its Mission and Mentoring Program. The program instructs lay leaders in such topics as ethics, spirituality, the sponsor’s history and charism, and the relationship between Catholic healthcare organizations and the Church. (See Mary Elizabeth Cullen, Sharon Richardt, and Rosemary Hume, “Mentoring Mission Leaders of the Future,” *Health Progress*, September-October 1997, pp. 36-38.)

The following are some of the key elements used in the Mission and Mentoring Program:

- **Reflection.** The program is conducted in a peaceful, retreatlike atmosphere. Participants are encouraged to spend a few minutes in meditation at the beginning and end of each day and to keep a daily journal.
- **Storytelling.** The program’s faculty urge participants to tell each other about their family backgrounds, including religious beliefs.
- **Mentoring.** The faculty demonstrate mentoring throughout the program.
- **Celebration.** Participants celebrate liturgies, seasonal occurrences, anniversaries, even birthdays as part of learning that delight can also be a spiritual experience.
- **Achieving balance.** Participants come to sense a certain rhythm underlying the various parts of the program: study, fun, prayer, socializing, and creative work. It is this rhythm that helps make the program formative.
- **Leadership.** At the close of the program, in what they call a “commissioning ceremony,” the faculty urge each participant to practice mission integration.

COMMUNITIES

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MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Change will be a constant in the coming decades. The data suggest that, by the year 2010, only 25 percent to 35 percent of all nurses will work in hospitals. Instead, they will be in primary healthcare settings, schools, and parishes and working in partnership with physicians. Some hospitals deemed unnecessary will be closed, and others will have to change to remain viable. The health of the whole person and the community must be our guiding vision as we make extremely difficult decisions.

Americans once awed by the miracles of modern medicine have lost trust and confidence in healthcare, with its focus on drugs, surgery, and cures at whatever the cost. They perceive hospitals and many physicians as caring more about money than about people.

Thus a major need of our times is for healthcare to regain the public trust. We must find caregivers who will listen to people and care about their problems. We must prove to our communities that we exist to serve all aspects of their health and well-being, not simply to make money. Much more needs to be done. Of course, we cannot do it all. Therefore we must select wisely, and what we choose to do we must do boldly.

Will Catholic healthcare exist a century from now? If all we care about is existing, then we should not exist. If we become integral parts of our communities, however, and if we broaden our perspective and define health as the physical, emotional, spiritual, and social well-being of every human person, we will be meeting the needs of our times. Then we will have made a difference in people's lives, which is and always will be the true meaning of Catholic healthcare.

By the end of the next century, if we have done our work well, we will be meeting very different needs than those of today. No one knows what those needs will be. What lies ahead is daunting, but we must have faith that the Spirit is guiding it all. □

SPIRITUALITY

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groups like theirs. A study process that is spiritually formative should, they said:

- Enhance the distinctively human, and therefore spiritual, quality of life
- Enhance personal as well as organizational effectiveness
- Support the values and heritage of the Daughters of Charity and promote those values individually and in the life of the organization
- Assist the Daughters of Charity to fulfill the goals of their mission to health, social service, and educational ministries, in all their facets³

Key Elements of a Spiritual Formation Process

The participants identified eight elements that, when practiced, can make an event spiritually formative:

- Reflection through silence, calming oneself, and preparing for prayer
- Retreats and pilgrimages
- Storytelling and the recounting of histories
- Formative reading, study, and evaluation
- Celebration
- Striving for balance in life
- Mentoring
- Leadership

After defining each of these elements, the participants discussed ways they could be made part of the work life of the organization.⁴

MAKING THE ORGANIZATIONAL MORE SPIRITUAL

After approving the publication of *Spirituality and Spiritual Formation*, DCNHS-EC's leaders met with the board chairpersons, CEOs, and mission services vice presidents of all of the system's hospitals to encourage them to understand and support the document. In addition, the system leaders amended the job description for hospital CEOs, indicating that they should give spirituality a high priority in the workplace.

The mission services vice presidents were asked to integrate spirituality and spiritual formation in their work. Each

was encouraged to add a spirituality subcommittee to the facility's mission committee. This subcommittee would promote discussion and comprehension of *Spirituality and Spiritual Formation* among hospital employees. Local CEOs agreed to provide annual updates on spirituality and spiritual formation in their organizations' annual reports.

SPIRITUAL INTEGRATION CONTINUES

Since the completion of the original study process and the publication of *Spirituality and Spiritual Formation* seven years ago, DCNHS-EC has continued to integrate spirituality into all aspects of its work. Each of the system's 10 hospitals continues to report on activities and events that integrate spirituality in the workplace, such as spirituality committees, retreats, renewal days, pilgrimages, periods of reflection before meetings, spiritual lectures, and workshops for employees and medical staff.

In September, St. Vincent Hospitals and Health Services, Indianapolis, broke ground for a 14,000-square-foot spirituality center for the organization's associates, medical staff, volunteers, and benefactors and the members of their families. The center, which will provide a retreatlike atmosphere (including overnight accommodations), will offer programs in spirituality and spiritual formation. □

☎ For more information, call Sr. Sharon Richardt, DC, or Jude Magers, 317-338-7005.

NOTES

1. *Spirituality and Spiritual Formation: Final Report of the Spiritual Formation Study Group*, Daughters of Charity National Health System—Eastern Region, Evansville, IN, December 1990, p. 3.
2. *Spirituality and Spiritual Formation*, pp. 3-4.
3. *Spirituality and Spiritual Formation*, p. 4.
4. *Spirituality and Spiritual Formation*, pp. 5-10.