

The Notion of Grace



*Catholic Healthcare West
Sponsors or Participates
in Three Leadership
Development Programs*



BY BERNITA McTERNAN

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Familiarity can sometimes dull the sharp edge of a phrase, even a mantra-like phrase such as “the healing ministry of Jesus.” Those of us who work in the Catholic health ministry may use it so often that it becomes mainstreamed into conventional thought and its radical wisdom is lost. However, if we are to model our ministry on that of Jesus, we must understand that Jesus’ spirituality—his experiential awareness of Spirit—was foundational for his life and ministry. He taught and healed from a perspective that saw reality as more than the tangible world of ordinary experience. Jesus lived in the conviction that the clear Light of Spirit (which people call by many different names) is with us each moment of every day. We sometimes describe this as *grace*.

It was in 2002 that Catholic Healthcare West (CHW), San Francisco, first became involved in the Ecclesiology and Spiritual Renewal Program for System Leaders, an annual pilgrimage that CHA sponsors to Vatican City in Rome. In 2002, our delegate was Michael Erne, CHW’s chief operating officer. When Erne returned, he described his trip at an executive management team meeting.

Those of us who attended that meeting were impressed both by Erne’s experience and by the words he used in sharing it. The journey had clearly inspired him. He had obviously brought back from Rome the notion of grace. In fact, the notion of grace had so strongly inspired him that he concluded by playing Joni Mitchell’s version of “Amazing Grace.”

This gesture resonated so deeply in our team that, for the next six meetings, the team member

responsible for the opening reflection began it by playing his or her favorite artist's rendition of "Amazing Grace." The voices of Aretha Franklin, Ray Charles, various gospel choirs, and even Bill Moyers (in a TV program about the history of the song) thus opened our meetings. Clearly, the Rome trip had so touched Erne that he was moved to share it with his colleagues.

A TRIP TO ROME

As a result of this experience, CHW incorporated the Ecclesiology and Spiritual Renewal Program as one facet of its own ministry leadership development program. Over the past three years, members of CHW's board of directors, senior leadership team members, and corporate members (women religious who represent the congregations that sponsor the system) have attended this program.

The Ecclesiology and Spiritual Renewal Program is intended to provide those who participate in it with:

- A deeper understanding of the theological foundation of the Catholic faith and the church's health ministry
- An historical and practical knowledge of the institutional structure and ministries of the Roman Catholic Church
- An immersion in the environment of Rome and the Vatican, resulting in a more holistic understanding of the historical and contemporary world church
- An experience of prayer and ritual that explores expressions of spirituality that shape the healing ministry as well as personal leadership
- An opportunity to build collegial relationships with other health care system leaders in the ministry

This spring, nine CHW representatives, includ-

ing Lloyd Dean, our president and CEO, joined 39 other ministry colleagues in making the trip to Rome (see "Ministry Leaders Participate in Learning Experience," *Catholic Health World*, June 15, 2005, pp. 1 and 4).

As the CHW officer responsible for sponsorship and mission integration, I saw the journey as an opportunity for sponsors, board members, and management team members to experience the grandeur, holiness, contradictions, and spirit of the church in Rome. It helped us, as health care leaders, to understand the intricacies of the Vatican, and, thanks to a side trip we made to Assisi, to experience the simplicity and power of the spirit of Sts. Francis and Clare. Each of us came home with a renewed outlook and perspective that cannot help but deepen the work we do.

Other members of the 2005 group described the trip in their own ways.

"I received a broader perspective of the church and how the dicasteries [the Vatican departments] view things," said Sr. Diane Grassilli, RSM, chair of CHW's board. "I felt lucky to be included. I appreciated the theological foundation provided in the classes and the discussions with staff that helped to integrate things. I clearly have a greater appreciation for folks who work in the Vatican and the issues of importance to them. I hope they learned a bit from us. I especially liked the networking opportunities."

George Bo-Linn, MD, CHW's chief medical officer and a senior vice president, said, "The greatest part was experiencing the ecclesiology with other members of the executive management team, as well as with several members of governance. The shared experience allowed me to use that foundation as a launching pad for deeper conversations that could be applied to CHW and also to my personal journey."

SUMMARY

Catholic Healthcare West (CHW), San Francisco, which either sponsors or participates in three separate leadership development programs, sees the formation of new ministry leadership as a matter of the first importance.

For the past four years, CHW has participated in CHA's Ecclesiology and Spiritual Renewal Program for System Leaders, the annual pilgrimage to the Vatican City in which ministry executives, board members, and sponsors get an opportunity to learn about the church's institutional structure and immerse themselves in its spiritual atmosphere.

In 2002 the system established its CHW Learning Institute, which offers all employees training in leadership,

clinical, governance, and employee development. Among other things, the institute has developed CHW's Competency Standards for Leadership.

In 2004 CHW, with four other Catholic health care systems in the western United States, created the Ministry Leadership Center, Sacramento. This spring, 49 CHW managers were among the students enrolled in the center's inaugural classes. Among other subjects, they studied the distinctive competencies—intellectual, affective, and spiritual—required to lead a health care ministry in its operations and governance.

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—Jarrett S. Anderson

Sr. Sheila Browne, RSM, chair of CHW's corporate members, said, “Being with nearly 50 wonderful people from many Catholic health systems in the United States was inspiring. Their sense of dedication and enthusiasm for the ministry was evident in their active participation and deep and reverent questioning in their effort to understand the system in Rome. The challenge for me is the apparent gap that exists between Rome and the American experience. Rome is coming from the mind-set of more than one billion Catholics worldwide, whereas the American church is a small part of that. Rome also has a 2,000-year history—its timeline is very different. The pilgrimage to Assisi was a highlight for me—the simplicity and environment were such a contrast to Rome.”

“My basic sense is that we need to stay focused on who we say we are,” Sr. Sheila added. “We know we are making a difference in a very challenging U.S. environment, and we should continue our work of building communications with Rome.”

Michael Blaszyk, CHW's executive vice president and chief financial officer, said, “It was very helpful for me to put into context the founding stories and formation of our sponsors with the broader relationship within the church. Given that Catholic health care is largely an American phenomenon, it reflects true mission and commitment in the absence of universality.”

And Jarrett S. Anderson, vice chair of CHW's board, said, “The understanding of my own spirituality and a renewed commitment to the ministry were the gifts I received in Rome.”

TWO LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS

To develop leaders, CHW has also either instituted or helped institute two other programs intended to deepen understanding and appreciation of the Catholic tradition and heritage.

The CHW Learning Institute Founded in July 2002, the institute offers all CHW employees education and training in the areas of leadership, clinical, governance, and employee development. Its methods include traditional instructor-led classroom courses, CD-ROM performance support tools, Web-based classes, and other multimedia

support resources. The institute emphasizes the skills and behaviors that define a faith-based organization.

Among other things, the institute has introduced CHW's Competency Standards for Leadership. The system's competency model has four levels. The first level comprises core competencies required of all employees. The other, more specific competencies are for the system's three leadership levels, first-line, senior, and executive.

The Ministry Leadership Center The center is a collaborative project sponsored by five Catholic health care systems based in the western part of the United States (see William J. Cox, “Nurturing the Ministry's Soul,” *Health Progress*, September-October 2004, pp. 38-43).^{*} This spring, 49 CHW managers were among the students enrolled in the center's inaugural classes. From the center's curriculum, the students will gain:

- An understanding of the dynamic and transformative Catholic tradition that forms the foundation of the church's healing ministry
- A personal exploration of their own connectedness to the values and culture of the Catholic tradition in health care
- An understanding of the distinctive integrated leadership competencies—intellectual, affective, and spiritual—required to lead a health care ministry in its operations and governance

LEADERSHIP FOR THE FUTURE

These three initiatives—the Ecclesiology and Spiritual Renewal Program for System Leaders, the CHW Learning Institute, and the Ministry Leadership Center—continue to provide the opportunity for personal growth, reflection, and an in-depth understanding and knowledge that CHW's leaders will need to guide the system through the years ahead.

At CHW, we recognize that, to truly be a healing ministry, a ministry of service, we needed to create a leadership model that includes a community and culture based on Jesus, the healer and teacher who taught through story and by example. Concerning this spring's trip to Rome, Dean said, “I think one of the essential competencies for any leader in Catholic health care is a clear understanding of who we are as a ministry, what our roots are, and how that translates into the decisions we make, our advocacy priorities, and our response to the call to serve. We were all graced by the journey to Rome.” ■

^{*}The sponsors are, besides CHW, the Daughters of Charity Health System, Los Altos Hills, CA; Providence Health System, Seattle; St. Joseph Health System, Orange, CA; and the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth Health System, Lenexa, KS.

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