

HELPING OTHERS IN A RESPECTFUL WAY

From the beginning of his papacy, Pope Francis has offered guidance for all of us, especially as we partner and work in low-income countries. In his writing, homilies, speeches and actions, he shows us how to walk with and be present to others.



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Francis has sparked my imagination and challenged my own way of being and thinking, how I conduct my work and even how I form my relationships. Here are some quotes that I find most relevant and some of the central themes they open for me. I hope they inspire you and catalyze discernment on your personal and organizational international outreach activities.

PHILOSOPHICAL SHIFT

"A way has to be found to enable everyone to benefit from the fruits of the earth, and not simply to close the gap between the affluent and those who must be satisfied with the crumbs falling from the table, but above all to satisfy the demands of justice, fairness and respect for every human being."

— Address to the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, June 20, 2013

When it comes to medical surplus donations and disaster response, the central issue for Catholic health care is as simple as this: First, do no harm.

As we donate materials for medical mission

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work, or as part of a response to national or international disasters, we must be ever vigilant that we are not sharing only the crumbs from the table, or those things that are broken or no longer needed by our organizations. Some items that are our surplus are appropriate. Oftentimes, they are not.

An issue that continues to challenge us is that of expired, or nearly expired, pain relievers. Here's my position: If we wouldn't dispense it here in the U.S., we shouldn't dispense it in the developing world. Here's my rationale: I know the medications are needed, and I know they haven't expired, they haven't "gone bad." However, if we believe a pain reliever is still good for use, we should advocate its usage in the United States, in our own communities, in our own ministries.

Put bluntly, let's shift from a "beggars can't be choosers" mentality to an "if it's good enough for them, it's good enough for me" philosophy. Let's all reflect more deeply on how we define quality — and justice — differently, depending on where our services are offered.

Learn more about medical surplus and disaster response at www.chausa.org/internationaloutreach/medical-surplus-recovery and www.chausa.org/internationaloutreach/disaster-relief.

IT'S NOT ABOUT US

"In this sense, I encourage the financial experts and the political leaders of your countries to consider the words of Saint John Chrysostom: 'Not to share one's goods with the poor is to rob them and to deprive them of life. It is not our goods that we possess, but theirs.'"

— Address to New Non-Resident Ambassadors to the Holy See, May 16, 2013

Pope Francis has served as a living, breathing example of something my parents repeatedly said

to me, the brother to two sisters: “It’s not all about you.” That observation is part of what the pope was saying when he advised financial experts and political leaders to consider the words of St. John Chrysostom.

Those who work in and with Catholic health care ministries indeed are actively sharing their resources, time and talents with those who are poor, based on the results of the Catholic Health Association’s recent study regarding short-term mission trips.

Survey responses highlighted that many from Catholic health care are reaching out to the developing world in this way. More than 500 respondents said they had been part of a short-term mission trip. Collectively, such participation represents approximately 1,000 trips over the past five years.

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While this is a great sign of our willingness to share, we need to make sure that even while we are sharing, we are doing it for the benefit of those we claim to be helping, and not for our own ego or to fulfill a personal sense of adventure. Yes, it is an adventure to participate in a mission in a different country, but that isn’t why we do it — it isn’t about us.

The full results of the Short-Term Medical Mission Trip Research Project will be presented at the 2014 Global Summit in Washington, D.C., Sept. 16-17. Learn more at www.chausa.org/events/calendar-of-events/global-summit/overview.

DIGNITY INCLUDES PARTICIPATION

“The current crisis is not only economic and financial but is rooted in an ethical and anthropological crisis. Concern with the idols of power, profit, and money, rather than with the value of the human person, has become a basic norm for functioning and a crucial criterion for organization. We have forgotten and are still forgetting that over and above business, logic and the parameters of the market is the human being; and that something is men and wom-

en inasmuch as they are human beings by virtue of their profound dignity: to offer them the possibility of living a dignified life and of actively participating in the common good.”

— Address to the Centesimus Annus Pro Pontifice Foundation, May 25, 2013

Last spring I traveled to Haiti as part of a project to assess potential for a group purchasing organization related to pharmaceutical needs and the service of medical equipment. The vetting included a visit to a rural hospital that has a fee-for-service operating model and is operated by a Haitian physician. During our conversation to learn about his model and how the 2010 earthquake impacted his facility and current processes, he expressed his belief that Haitians must participate in their own health and the building of a system of care — including paying for it through some means.

This gentleman is planning for the day when Haitians do not depend on medical mission trip doctors to come in and out on a rotating basis, as well as when medical technicians are not rotated in and out to fix broken equipment. He reiterated our belief that such people must participate in the life of the community. He said “handouts” are not strengthening the country, but rather, are keeping Haitians from realizing some of their own independence and capabilities.

Later that day, in a conversation with a colleague who had not been to Haiti before, I said something about the day when we are no longer needed in Haiti. She sat in disbelief — she didn’t even comprehend that the goal is to leave Haiti.

As we work in low-income countries, let us all ask if we are building processes and infrastructure that rely on our continued participation; or rather, if we are partnering to build self-sustainability and resourcefulness for the persons who live in those communities.

LEARN FROM ONE ANOTHER

“We need to help others to realize that the only way is to learn how to encounter others with the right attitude, which is to accept and esteem them as companions along the way, without interior resistance. Better yet, it means learning to find Jesus in the faces of others, in their voices, in their pleas.”

— *Evangelii Gaudium*

The only way to help another is to do so respectfully, conscious that both sides have a lot to learn from dialogue and that both will emerge richer for the experience.

Sr. Mary Haddad, RSM, is CHA's senior director of sponsor services. In a 2013 video presentation on the call to serve Catholic ministry and international outreach, she shared some of her personal experiences working in low-income countries. Her purpose was to shed light on a cultural arrogance that can sometimes guide our activities without our realizing it. Here is a bit of what she said:

While working on my MSW degree, I had the privilege of receiving clinical experience in Trinidad. During this time, I worked with SERVOL, Service Volunteered for All, a community-based development program that was built on the belief that it was *not* a welfare organization. Rather, it was a catalyst for social change guided by a basic philosophy: You should never presume that you know the needs of people; ask them what their needs are and what type of help they want.

In her presentation, Sr. Haddad warned us not to assume that because people are poor, they don't know what they need. Life circumstances

bar their access to necessary resources, not lack of knowledge or sophistication. It is cultural arrogance to believe that superiority comes with a specific national or ethnic background and education, she noted.

The only way to help another, said Sr. Haddad, is to do so respectfully, conscious that both sides have a lot to learn from dialogue and that both will emerge richer for the experience.

I could not have said it better, and I hope we all can consider what we receive in return when we work with persons in the developing world. Do we treat them as equal partners and recognize the lessons they've offered us?

You can access Sr. Haddad's presentation at www.chausa.org/internationaloutreach/resources/international-outreach-presentation-videos.

SOWING HOPE

"Poverty demands that we sow hope Poverty is the flesh of the poor Jesus, in this hungry child, in the sick person, in these unjust social structures."

— Q&A after meeting with students of Jesuit schools, June 7, 2013

Each day, Catholic ministries are reaching out to their brothers and sisters across the United States and abroad. I am humbled by the scope and scale of the activities and privileged to at times be able to assist in these expressions of our mission.

May we always sow hope in all of our international outreach efforts.

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