

WHAT DOES THE VISION MEAN FOR HEALTH MINISTRY?

Since June 2009, people throughout the Catholic health ministry have been engaged in developing our vision for the next decade and describing the preferred future of Catholic health ministry in 2020. Over 1,200 people have participated, more than 150 of those in multiple times and in multiple ways.



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A steering committee of 17 people from diverse roles in the ministry guided the visioning process. They included sponsors, people in governance roles, nurses and physicians and leaders in mission, theology, administration. Committee members represented ministries large and small along the care continuum, and they came from every region of the country. Although the Catholic Health Association staffed and facilitated the process, the participants were regularly reminded that the vision is intended not for CHA, but rather for the entire Catholic health ministry in the United States.

The vision statement came together in the context of a plausible future scenario that describes what the participants anticipate to be the demographic, social, political and technological context of health care delivery in the year 2020. This scenario also considers the evolving trends of religious congregations, sponsors and the church, themes I explored in the March-April 2010 issue of *Health Progress*.

We tested the draft language for the vision with persons across the ministry to determine which words evoked the most passion and inspiration as well as concepts that could be acted upon. Nearly a thousand people provided input during this stage. The steering committee then labored over that input to come up with the language we ultimately chose. I want to peel back some layers of the vision statement to help everyone understand the emphasis that the committee placed on certain key phrases.

The statement says, “Today, we continue, as those who founded our ministries, to be inspired

by the Gospel stories of healing. Our work is grounded in our core beliefs and values,” as outlined in our *A Shared Statement of Identity for the Catholic Health Ministry*.

The vision calls us to serve as a compass to guide our nation through the complexities of the evolving health delivery system. That means we can help shape the delivery system that will result

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STEEPED IN TRADITION, FOCUSED ON THE FUTURE.

from our reform efforts.

It challenges us over the next decade to work collaboratively, promote innovation and generously share knowledge to improve the health of individuals and communities. This is a journey, not an end point, one that is rooted in the tremendous amount of influence that Catholic health ministry has in the United States — as we recently witnessed with passage of health reform. It should be noted that improving health is more than improving health status. Sometimes we have to work to improve health at a community level, not just at an individual level.

The vision statement says that together we will continue to champion the sanctity of life from conception through death; to lead in the development of sustainable, person-centered models of care across the continuum; and to meet the current and emerging needs of vulnerable persons.

Sustainable means financially sound, replicable and resource-conscious. Person-centered is in contrast to the traditional institution-centric model, and includes physical, psychological and spiritual dimensions of each person. Across the continuum reflects a lowered emphasis on bricks and mortar. Emerging needs reflects the reality that needs change over time. Vulnerable refers to all forms of vulnerability, not simply economic.



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OUR VISION FOR THE NEXT DECADE

The vision calls us to engage all — that is, everyone, not just the current leaders — who are called to serve through a ministry-wide commitment to formation. And finally, the vision calls us to broaden and deepen our relationships within the community of the church, that is, to reach out to work collaboratively with other ministries of the church, within parishes and with diocesan bishops, to strengthen our Catholic identity.

This vision presents an inspiring challenge and a weighty responsibility for all of us in the ministry today. I am reminded of the words of the late Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador: “This is what we are about: We plant seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further development. We provide yeast that produces effects far beyond our capability.

“We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and to do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord’s grace to enter and do the rest.

“We may never see the results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker. We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own.”

The litmus test for determining the true value of this vision statement will be whether leaders of our ministries use it as a North Star against which to test the direction they are leading their ministries over the next decade. We hope and pray that leaders in the ministry in 2020 will look back over the previous decade and see that we made significant progress toward achieving our preferred future for the Catholic health ministry.

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Inspired by the Gospel and grounded in our beliefs and values, the Catholic health ministry will serve as a compass to guide our nation through the complexities of an evolving health care system.

Over the next decade, we will collaborate, promote innovation and generously share knowledge to improve the health of individuals and communities.

TOGETHER, WE WILL:

- *Continue to champion the sanctity of life from death.*
- *Lead the development of sustainable, person-centered models of care across the continuum.*
- *Meet the current and emerging needs of vulnerable persons.*
- *Engage all who are called to serve through a ministry-wide commitment to formation.*
- *Broaden and deepen our relationships within the community of the Church.*



For more information go to
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JOURNAL OF THE CATHOLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES

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HEALTH PROGRESS®

Reprinted from *Health Progress*, July-August 2010
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