

“And now, dear brothers and sisters, we want you to know what will happen to the believers who have died, so you will not grieve like people who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and was raised to life again, we also believe that when Jesus returns, God will bring back ... the believers who have died.” 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14

Easter paradoxically celebrates the joy of fullness through the experience of emptiness. We must open our hands in emptiness to receive something new or hold the hand of another. It is only with an empty womb that a mother finally embraces her child. Like the grain of wheat that has fallen to the ground to yield a tenfold harvest, in his dying, Jesus most clearly teaches us what it means to live. After the hurt and pain of the crucifixion comes the hope of new life.

The services we provide as Catholic health care are often not technically or operationally different from others in the field. We take the same tests, offer the same diagnosis, manage the same patient populations, work with the same types of staff, heal the same illnesses, and yet, *why* we do these things is different.

Cardinal Joseph Bernardin in *A Sign of Hope*, wrote: “This is what makes Christian health care truly distinctive. We are to do for one another what Jesus did: comfort others by inspiring in them hope and confidence in life. As God's ongoing, creative activity in the world and the love of Christ make it possible for us to continue to live despite the chaos of illness, so too our work in the world must also give hope to those for whom we care. Our distinctive vocation in Christian health care is not so much to heal better or more efficiently than anyone else; it is to bring comfort to people by giving them an experience that will strengthen their confidence in life. The ultimate goal of our care is to give to those who are ill, through our care, a reason to hope.”

The hope we offer to those we serve includes and transcends the hope of a healthy diagnosis or a positive outcome. It is not hope *for* something, it is hope and faith *in* something. The hope of Catholic health care is the enduring and eternal love of God. In sickness, in destruction, in loss and even in death we are held, kept and loved by God. Easter promises us life in spite of our death.

Health care is a dynamic and sometimes unsettling place. From managing the ever-changing reimbursement models, to keeping up the necessary advocacy efforts, from working toward health care for all, to daily staffing and coworker issues, from the daily



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diseases and tragedies to meeting the many needs of our communities, the relentless press is heavy and hope hard to see.

And still it is true that “Catholic health care services rejoice in the challenge to be Christ’s healing compassion in the world and see their ministry not only as an effort to restore and preserve health, but also as a spiritual service and a sign of that final healing that will one day bring about the new creation that is the ultimate fruit of Jesus’ ministry and God’s love for us.” *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services*, 38

Prayer

Let us pray together,

God of new life and resurrection, we are grateful for your call to the Catholic health ministry. In this season of Easter joy make us witnesses to the new life of your resurrection. May we be bearers of healing in the midst of illness, comfort in the face of sorrow and hope in times of hurt. This day and always, give us the graces we need to more fully follow you and become who we claim to be in your name. Amen.