

**“I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.” *John 17:20-21***

As a part of the one body of Christ and working toward the Kingdom of God, Catholic health care must continually reach outside itself to participate in the life of the Church. An essential element of being the hands and feet of Jesus on Earth today, Catholic health care commits itself to acting in communion with the institutional Church.

Traditionally we have done this through offering sacraments and prayer and displaying the signs and symbols of our faith. For much of our history women and men religious were the concrete operational and spiritual link to the wider Church. In more recent years we have added the formation of leaders and co-workers to understand, appreciate and uphold our unique identities and core values. Even so, these practices are each internal to our facilities. No part of the Church exists for itself, but has to expand beyond its walls.

The Latin root of our word communion, *communio*, indicates fellowship, sharing and mutual participation. True communion does not happen without active participation in answering the call of the Gospel. Therefore, to act in communion with the Church, indeed to act as Church, is to collaborate with the parishes and diocese in which we serve. It means we prioritize partnerships with other Catholic ministries in our local context.

Jesus' life was a dynamic combination of teaching and preaching, service and healing. To the extent we participate with our brothers and sisters who teach and preach in the name of Jesus and those who serve in his name in all manner of ways, we are better able to manifest the fullness of Christ's body on earth and bear witness together to the Kingdom of God that both is and is to come.

## **For Reflection**

**“You are the Body of Christ. In you and through you the work of the incarnation must go forward. You are to be taken. You are to be blessed, broken and distributed, that you may be the means of grace and vehicles of eternal love.” *Saint Augustine***

- Do I / we honor and operationalize the identity of our ministry as a “Catholic work”?
- Do I / we reach out to the other Catholic ministries for local, regional and national partnerships?
- Do I / we uphold the commitment of Catholic moral and ethical teachings?
- Do I / we build or tear down community among our family and team and neighborhood?
- Do I / we actively participate and bring the fullness of ourselves to those around us?

## **Prayer**

Let us pray together,

God of all times and places, in each generation you gather a people unto yourself called to serve, teach and heal in your name. Send your spirit over your Church across the world that we may labor together to do your will, reveal your love and share your goodness. In this season of reflection and prayer, give us the graces we need to more fully follow you and become who we claim to be in your name. Amen.