It’s a celebration of the healing ministry of health care, which compels us to extend our compassion beyond hospital and clinic walls and into the communities we serve. Faith is sometimes all you have. Being there, filled with our faith and God’s love, is all that matters.

We prayed together, and God became present. We never truly know how what we do may touch another’s life, or our own.

These were some of the many faces of Jesus. It touched my heart.

Sacred Stories Seventeenth Edition

Catholic Health Initiatives
Imagine better health."
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FOREWORD</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A FIRE BURNING IN US</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>CHI St. Luke’s Health Memorial, Lufkin, Texas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>CHI St. Vincent Morrilton, Morrilton, Arkansas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAN YOU HEAR ME IN THE NOISE?</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>CHI St. Joseph Health, Bryan, Texas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE SECOND INCARNATION</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>CHI Mercy Health, Roseburg, Oregon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE BLESSING OF SCHUYLOR</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>CHI St. Joseph Health, Bryan, Texas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIVING UP OR GIVING HOPE</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>KentuckyOne Health, Louisville, Kentucky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEVERLY</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>CHI Living Communities, Toledo, Ohio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A LITTLE BOY AND JESUS</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>CHI Health Good Samaritan, Kearney, Nebraska</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A PLACE OF COMFORT</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>CHI Mercy Medical Center, Williston, North Dakota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE POWER OF DANCE</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>St. Clare Commons, Perrysburg, Ohio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOLY CROSS CHAPEL: A BEACON OF HOPE</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>CHI St. Luke’s The Woodlands Hospital, The Woodlands, Texas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>CHI St. Vincent, Little Rock, Arkansas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A SACRED CONVERSATION</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>St. Clare Commons, Perrysburg, Ohio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MY BEAUTIFUL STORY</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>CHI St. Vincent Hot Springs, Hot Springs, Arkansas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A LITTLE SPARKLE GOES A LONG WAY</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>CHI St. Francis Health, Breckenridge, Minnesota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CINDY FROM THE SIDEWALK</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>CHI St. Vincent, Little Rock, Arkansas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOW AND WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Catholic Health Initiatives National Office, Englewood, Colorado</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHAT IS GOD’S PLAN FOR ME?</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>St. Leonard, Centerville, Ohio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRING YOUR SPIRITUALITY TO WORK</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Catholic Health Initiatives National Office, Englewood, Colorado</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE ART OF LISTENING</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>CHI St. Alexius Health, Bismarck, North Dakota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENJOY LIFE TO THE FULLEST</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Jewish Hospital, KentuckyOne Health Louisville, Kentucky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Catholic Health Initiatives National Office, Englewood, Colorado</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BREAD FROM HEAVEN</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>CHI Health St. Elizabeth, Lincoln, Nebraska</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE RENOVATION</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>CHI Franciscan Health, Tacoma, Washington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I NEED TO TOUCH MORE LEPERS</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>CHI Health Mercy Council Bluffs, Council Bluffs, Iowa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The story of Catholic Health Initiatives officially began in 1996, when 10 congregations of women religious created one of the nation’s largest nonprofit health care systems. As we celebrate the 20th anniversary of CHI, we remember that our ministry of health is deeply rooted. For centuries, faithful servants have practiced the love of Christ by caring for those in need. We continue, nurture and enhance that legacy as we create the next expressions of the ministry in this new era of health care.

While we reach for new heights of caring, compassion and health in our communities, we take time to record and preserve the moments in which God is most present and powerful in our work. That’s what Sacred Stories is all about. With gratitude to the authors, the sisters, all who are part of CHI and all those we serve, we are thrilled to present this 17th edition of Sacred Stories.
In the 20th year of CHI, we continue the heritage and legacy of the sisters who formed this organization. One of the many things we learned from them is to continually read and respond to the signs of the times. Today, we see and respond to the need for care to be delivered in new ways, new locations and new settings; and, the demand for care that will most effectively increase the health of individuals and communities.

In our view, we have an unprecedented invitation to bring our gifts and talents to new places; to meet people where they are and partner with them to improve health. As we accept this invitation, we have new opportunities to make the power and presence of God real to those we serve, serve with and ourselves, both inside and outside our hospitals.

We are fortunate that our work has the power to change the lives of the people we serve and improve the well-being of communities. It also has the power to change us. As we enter into the lives of others to create pathways to healing and health, each of us has the opportunity to feel our individual spirituality awaken and blossom.

In this edition of Sacred Stories, members of our CHI family share their experience of those powerful moments of spirituality, understanding and change. We hope you enjoy these stories and are inspired to write your own.

Kevin E. Lofton, FACHE
Chief Executive Officer

Thomas R. Kopfensteiner, STD
Executive Vice President, Mission
Suggested Sacred Text

With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight.
— Luke 24:31

Sacred Story

A neighbor and regular visitor, lovingly nicknamed “Ms. Piggy,” stopped by our hospital in San Augustine, Texas, the day after Labor Day. She was late for the triple blessing ceremony for the new parking lot, the new kitchen floor and all who labor in this rural East Texas field of healing.

Although she was late, Ms. Piggy brought the best blessing of all. She anointed us with her beautiful voice, singing song after song. As we all enjoyed ice cream, one woman said, “It’s too bad you weren’t here to sing ‘Amazing Grace’ with us, you sing so well.”

“Oh, I love to sing,” said Ms. Piggy. “Which way would you like me to sing ‘Amazing Grace’? I can sing it three different ways.” She sang a verse or two of the hymn in three styles: southern harmony, blues and gospel. There were comments of “Yes, amen!” and smiles all around.

“How about the song you sang at the revival last week?” another woman asked.

“You mean ‘Rich Woman, Poor Woman’?” asked Ms. Piggy. She sang a gospel song about a woman whose father had given her fine clothing, a mansion and a yacht; and another woman, dressed in rags, whose father had given her the sky, the beautiful earth and an eternal palace. Then, Ms. Piggy sang “You Must be Born Again”; and her favorite, “Precious Lord, Take my Hand.”

As my coworkers and I walked from the parking lot back to the hospital, we meditated on the disciples’ walk to Emmaus. We listened to the voice of Jesus asking us, “What are you talking about as you walk along? What things?” In the cafeteria, we shared bread to recognize the presence of Jesus in our lives, our service and our songs.

Jesus drew near that afternoon through Ms. Piggy’s singing. In the Reverence of her singing, the Integrity of each note, her Compassionate delivery, and the Excellence of the whole experience, we deepened our immersion in the Core Values that we had all pledged to honor as a healing team. Since then, the fire of God’s love has burned stronger in us.

JAY GILCHRIST
CHI St. Luke’s Health Memorial
Lufkin, Texas

Question for Reflection

In whose presence were you that, as the moment passed, you realized that you had just encountered the Risen Christ?
**Suggested Sacred Text**

*For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward.* — Mark 9:41

**Sacred Story**

Mr. E was admitted to St. Vincent Morrilton after being found unresponsive along the roadside by state police. Mr. E was dazed, confused and downright exhausted. This determined man had walked more than 189 miles en route to Tulsa, Oklahoma. He had literally walked the soles off of his shoes.

Mr. E was gaunt, disheveled and in need of a hot bath, clothing, food and rest. We gave him these things, but they were nothing compared to what we received from his visit.

As the hospitalist on duty, I needed to make sure Mr. E was medically stable and that his needs were taken care of. His tests showed no signs of infection or dehydration. Other than calloused and blistered feet, he was medically stable. He bathed for the first time in weeks, we dressed his wounds and provided plenty of food and fresh coffee to drink.

I knew that I would be faced with discharging Mr. E the next day. It was a challenge: would I discharge him to the street so he could continue his walk to Tulsa, or could I ask the staff to help him above and beyond what our job descriptions call for, more as a brother in need?

I found that, within hours and without any prompting, the staff had purchased new clothes and found a slightly used jacket for Mr. E. You could feel the presence of the Holy Spirit as staff members asked what else they could do for Mr. E.

The next day, Mr. E said his feet were a little sore but he’d make it to Tulsa. We knew that we were being blessed with an opportunity to really help him, so we called the bus station to reserve a ticket for Tulsa. Donations came in from staff all around the hospital. The generosity and willingness to serve were so overwhelming to me that I can’t even imagine how Mr. E felt. We gave Mr. E his bus ticket, bandages for his feet, brown bag meals and bottled water for his trip.

In coming together and responding generously to someone in need, we learned more about each other and about the gift of working in this ministry. Mr. E was blessed to be sure, but we received a greater blessing: it is truly better to give than to receive.

**LAURA BEAN-CLARK, APRN**
CHI St. Vincent Morrilton
Morrilton, Arkansas

**Questions for Reflection**

*Where do you find “blessings” in your daily work?*

*Who has given you “a cup of water to drink?”*

"The generosity and willingness to serve were so overwhelming to me..."
Suggested Sacred Text

I am with you always, to the very end of the age.
— Matthew 28:20

Sacred Story

The building we worked in that day was crowded and noisy. We were a team of medical missionaries from the diocese of Austin, Texas, working in a small village in Honduras called Nueva Palestina. We were doctors, dentists, nurses, translators and helpers busy at our tasks. As usual, there was a crowd gathered, clamoring to get in to see us. We had a gatekeeper in charge of letting in just enough people for us to serve at one time, but the environment was chaotic, with excitement, anxiety, fearfulness, pain, desperation, relief, joy and laughter all audible at the same time.

I struggled with why it had to be that way: why couldn’t it be quiet and calm? On that particular day, I got an answer, and it stunned me.

I was busy and having a hard time hearing my own thoughts. For one brief moment, I just sat and listened to the cacophony surrounding me. That’s when a quiet little voice inside my head said, “Can you hear me in the noise?”

Such as simple message, but it made me stop and take notice of a much bigger reality. This was more than a noisy crowd seeking medical care and a group of medical providers trying to help out. I heard and was aware of God’s very presence, audible at that moment, existing in the noise itself. God’s spirit was speaking, trying to be known to us in the voices of people asking for our ears to listen to their needs. He was present, not in spite of the noise, but actually within it.

I had to let that sink in. As the day went on, from time to time I would listen to the little voice again.

Our conversations with God are often one-way, with us pouring out our needs and concerns. How wonderful it is to occasionally hear God say something directly to us, sometimes through scripture, liturgy, or the wonders of nature. On that blessed day in Nueva Palestina, I realized more clearly that God is everywhere. In the desperate eyes of the poor who come to see us, God is looking right at us. In our own hearts and heads, God whispers encouragement and instruction. God is wherever two or more of us connect in care, concern and love.

Back home in our clinics and hospitals, it is actually harder for me to hold on to this truth in the daily routine. I often find myself struggling and feeling put upon by the demands of the day. Why is that? If I take a moment to recall that wonderful day in Honduras, I can barely perceive a similar message: “I’m still here, even in this noise.” Then, I can once again grasp the call to be God’s hands, ears and voice for the next person I encounter.

STEPHEN BRADEN, MD
CHI St. Joseph Health
Bryan, Texas

Questions for Reflection

When you find yourself struggling and being put upon by the demands of the day, how do you quiet the noise to be attentive to the quiet little voice inside your head?

How have you recently been God’s hands, ears and voice for someone?
Suggested Sacred Text

God wanted everyone to know this rich and glorious secret inside and out... the mystery in a nutshell is this: Christ is in you, so therefore you can look forward to sharing in God’s glory. — Colossians 1:27

Sacred Story

On Thursday, October 1, 2015, a senseless act of violence forced its way into our small, quiet community. A barrage of gunshots broke the peace in Snyder Hall at Umpqua Community College, tragically claiming the lives of nine people: eight aspire students and one respected instructor. The entire community was utterly shocked and devastated.

The CHI Mercy Health community experienced a profound sense of agony and heartbreak as we prayerfully readied ourselves to receive the injured. Ten victims arrived for emergency medical treatment. They were met with clinical proficiency and trauma service coordination that can only be described as miraculous. As I recount the story and contemplate how well things actually unfolded, it occurs to me that a force much bigger than our personal strength or dexterity as a team must have been at play.

The order and beauty that flowed out of the chaos and horror was breathtaking and beyond natural explanation. Our staff members could easily have been paralyzed by fear that the next gurney to come in would hold a loved one. Instead, they showed such fortitude and professionalism that I’m convinced I witnessed a second incarnation. God generously entered into the flesh of my coworkers and manifested through countless acts of heroism, explicit displays of compassion, and bottomless outpourings of love and mercy. My colleagues were the embodiment of Christ!

God helped our staff press through the darkness and provide brilliantly good medical care to the victims, their families, and the members of our grieving community. It was moving to see how our suffering employees shared God’s love. They lavished each other with as much encouragement and comfort as time and the work to be done allowed. It was deeply humbling and positively inspiring to witness and be a part of.

Demonstrations of charity and love continue to fill our community with hope and move us further along the road to recovery. As I write, I am gently reminded that in the wake of this tragedy, a spirit of solidarity and generosity has seized the heart of CHI Mercy Health and mobilized us to be the hands and feet of Christ. The warmth and love we continue to show the victims, their families and each other is both palpable and God-like.

DAVID PRICE
CHI Mercy Health
Roseburg, Oregon

Questions for Reflection

Recall a moment in your ministry when you pressed through the darkness to serve God’s people. Where did your strength come from?

"... God helped our staff press through the darkness."
Suggested Sacred Text

Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives one child such as this in my name receives me. — Matthew 18:3-5

Sacred Story

Once in a while, God blesses you by placing someone in your life who brings out the best in you. In April 2015, we hired Schuylor to work in our sterile processing department. He is part of a program through which our organization employs adults who have disabilities, helping them join the mainstream through employment.

The decision to hire was made, in part, with an eye toward our mission and values. We thought that we would be helping Schuylor. We had no idea that he was going to flip the tables on us.

Schuylor performs his assigned duties with minimal assistance or supervision, and his work has been a great help to the rest of the employees in sterile processing. And, he is a delight! He is quick to catch on, and is great at anything to do with numbers. The job that he does provides welcome relief to his coworkers, but the benefit he brings us extends so much farther than that.

Schuylor had a birthday a few weeks ago and we had a little party. We had a card, cupcakes, and gave Schuylor a little stuffed chimpanzee that he loved. He was so excited that he called his mom on speakerphone and introduced everyone in the room to her.

Almost every day, someone approaches me to tell me their “Schuylor Story.” He is a hugger, and we all benefit from his hugs. Schuylor has a way of bringing out a side of people that they may not have even known they had. In so many ways, he reminds those of us fortunate enough to interact with him of the things that really matter in life: enthusiasm, appreciation of others, and finding joy in everyday occurrences and events. We are better people because of him.

Some people might think, as we once did, that we are helping Schuylor out. If you ask us, we are getting the better end of the deal.

DEE STOKES
CHI St. Joseph Health
Bryan, Texas

Question for Reflection

Who has God placed in your life that reminds you of the beautiful innocence in which Jesus tells us we will receive him?

Have you embraced this childlike innocence?
GIVING UP OR GIVING HOPE
Giving Up or Giving Hope

Suggested Sacred Text

Yes, people of Zion, you will live in Jerusalem and weep no more. He will be gracious to you when he hears your cry; when he hears he will answer. When the Lord has given you the bread of suffering and the water of distress, he who is your teacher will hide no longer, and you will see your teacher with your own eyes. Whether you turn to the right or left, your ears will hear these words behind you, “This is the way, follow it.” — Isaiah 30:19-21

Sacred Story

When you walk into a client’s home for the first time and see a house in disarray, find dogs fighting in the living room, and hear the client cursing, it’s hard not to be taken aback. In fact, during our first visit to Paul’s home, we were well within our rights as caregivers to walk out, considering his poor attitude and inappropriate language.

But, we don’t give up that easily. Our home-based ministry is designed to help clients like Paul. It’s our mission to reach out to the most vulnerable. We serve people who not only have serious health conditions, but other challenges as well.

Paul was rough and tough on the outside. His demeanor and frequent cursing seemed to confirm his agitation at our presence. It would have been easy to form a judgement, but then we learned why Paul was the way he was.

Years earlier, Paul had been carjacked and assaulted. He suffered post-traumatic stress disorder and depression. He was scared of the outside world and his social isolation fueled his loneliness. His dogs and his gruff demeanor were defenses to keep people out of his life. He was testing us to see if we would be scared off. But, we kept coming back each week.

A breakthrough moment occurred during one of our visits to Paul. Instead of being agitated and clearly ready for us to leave, he asked if we’d like to share some food with him. Over time, he began to call us to confirm that we were coming to his house. Most importantly, he began to take steps toward improving his own health.

Three months later, he began to drive again and go to the grocery store and pharmacy by himself. He attended a health seminar on his own and saw a counselor. He lost 36 pounds. Instead of frequenting the emergency department as he once did, he began making his own doctor appointments.

The message was clear: Paul began to take care of himself once he was sure that we cared about him.

As caregivers, our greatest joy is to see our clients thrive. There are times that it seems impossible, but Paul’s example reminds us not to give up. By caring for those who are most vulnerable, we might unlock their own hope and desire to care for themselves.

HEALTH CONNECTIONS INITIATIVE CARE TEAM
Ginger Florence, Bethany May, Ashley Dawson and Harry Young
KentuckyOne Health
Louisville, Kentucky

Questions for Reflection

When has persistent effort with a difficult person led to a breakthrough? What helped you stay engaged in the effort?

What part does hope play in helping you push through a difficult situation?
Suggested Sacred Text

As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God’s varied grace.
— Peter 4:10

Sacred Story

I had known Beverly since her admission to our Joseph Bernardin Residence. When I visited or held meetings there, she was always outspoken and never afraid to tell it like it was. She was a strong-willed and determined woman who liked to remind me of “how the sisters would have done it” (she had worked with the Franciscan Sisters of the Poor for many years). As she reminded me of how to do my job better, we became close friends.

When her health began to fail, she entered our on-campus Health and Rehabilitation Center. I stopped by to talk with her often. Our conversations took on a new tone as her focus turned to her life journey and her family, far away from her. She shared many stories about her upbringing, her parents, her husband and her children. These conversations often ended in tears as she came to realize that she was not as strong as she used to be and needed to rely more on others to care for her.

She was still a determined woman, and I found her one day watching a history course on an educational cable channel. She told me she wanted to continue her education to keep her mind in order. She said that her only regret in life was not completing her own college degree due to the time she spent raising her children, all of whom earned college degrees.

I immediately started thinking about how to make this happen for her. Encouraging our residents to reach their dreams, even during retirement, is part of our values. Actually helping them achieve their dreams, as I found out, is a surreal experience.

I contacted Wright State University. They were excited about the opportunity to make Beverly’s dream come true. In late December 2014, with her family and many of our staff present, Beverly, at the age of 84, received an honorary bachelor of humanities degree presented by the executive vice president and secretary to the Board of Trustees of Wright State University. The university president was also in attendance, wearing his doctoral robes. Tears flowed from all directions.

I thought about how many of these opportunities come our way in health care, and how blessed we are to be present for them. It really is an incredible gift to be a gift to another by the grace of God. That is the privilege of serving in a ministry like ours.

Beverly passed away a few months later. I thank her for being one of the best professors I ever had.

TIMOTHY DRESSMAN
CHI Living Communities
Toledo, Ohio

Questions for Reflection

Is there someone in your workplace, family or community who could benefit from a special gift? How can you make this gift a reality?

There are times when the greatest gift we can give is being present to patients, clients, residents and each other. In the busy pace of health care, how can you pause and be wholly present to someone in need?
A LITTLE BOY AND JESUS

Suggested Sacred Text

Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” — Matthew 19:14

Sacred Story

In the healing garden at our Cancer Center there is a statue of Jesus. He is seated, so patients and family members are able to sit beside him in prayer or contemplation.

One day as I was looking out the break room window into the healing garden, I saw a little boy about three years old. He was on the bench next to Jesus, gently stroking Jesus’ arms and face as if in deep conversation. He stayed there, gazing into the face of Jesus as if in a plea.

There was a woman standing close by, and a man in the distance. They were the little boy’s parents, and I realized that I knew their story: the little boy’s daddy had an untreatable brain tumor, and was going to die.

My heart went out to all of them. I knew why the little boy needed to touch and talk to Jesus, and it touched my soul that we had a sacred place for him to do just that.

RITA KAUL
CHI Health Good Samaritan
Kearney, Nebraska

Questions for Reflection

What situations have recently touched your soul, and why?

Where is your sacred place for prayer or contemplation, and how often do you rest there?

“I knew why the little boy needed to touch and talk to Jesus, and it touched my soul that we had a sacred place for him to do just that.”
Suggested Sacred Text

The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; the Lord delivers them from all their troubles. The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. — Psalm 34:17-18

Sacred Story

What’s it like to be far from home, hurting and lonely? For many people in Williston, North Dakota, this is their daily experience.

The Bakken Oil Fields call to people from all over the world. Some come at the bidding of their employers, but many come from hard places with high unemployment to find work; for the promise of high wages that will help them out from under great debt; or to try to make their fortune. Many come alone, and many of their stories are desperate.

One day, one of our volunteers brought a distraught woman to the Quality/Case Management Office. The woman wanted to register a concern about the care she received in an ancillary department. But, within a few minutes, she told me that she had recently miscarried and felt sad, isolated and lonely. She had moved to Williston just before her miscarriage, and being far from friends and family was a struggle for her. In short, there was no one close at hand with whom she could talk, cry or confide. Her initial complaint was forgotten in the rush of painful emotion.

As a lifelong obstetrical nurse, now working in quality, I knew the pain the woman was feeling. I ran to get her one of the comfort kits we give to mothers who miscarry. The kit provides things for a mother to hold on to, including a baby blanket and a stuffed animal. There are pamphlets on grieving; when we can, we include the baby’s footprints and picture, too.

I also found our chaplain, who immediately came to help. We hugged our patient, crying and praying with her, surrounding her with God’s love.

Perhaps this was a divine appointment; but, I have seen things like this happen so many times as people move here to Willison without their familiar networks of family and friends. They come into a bustling boom town, but they often feel so alone.

This encounter reminded me of the host of needs that surround us. We are here, and we have prepared to care for our community, whoever may come into it. We continue to be mindful of our opportunity to help people by providing a place of comfort. This is what caring for the whole person is about: giving assurance, encouragement, hope and spiritual support.

DENISE HAUGEN, RN
CHI Mercy Medical Center
Williston, North Dakota

Questions for Reflection

How might you provide “a place of comfort” for someone who may need it today?

Regardless of your role, how can you care for the whole person in those you serve today?
THE POWER OF DANCE

Suggested Sacred Text

You changed my mourning into dancing, you took off my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness.
— Psalm 30:11

Sacred Story

At St. Clare Commons, we frequently have musical entertainment for our residents. It varies in genre, and might involve accordion, banjo, piano, guitar, a capella singing, etc. When the performance includes dance tunes, I am reminded that many of our residents love dancing. As a dancer myself, I enjoy dancing with our residents (always keeping safety in mind, of course).

During one performance, I had just finished dancing with a woman who lives in our memory care unit when I looked over at Anita, who has mobility restrictions and uses a wheelchair. Anita had loved dancing as a young woman, and I knew she still did. I saw a disappointed look on her face as her son, who was visiting, told her that it might not be a good idea for her to dance.

An idea popped into my head that would maintain safety while providing an opportunity for happiness. I whispered to Anita’s son, “Would you mind if I asked your mom for a wheelchair dance?” He looked at me quizzically, but said “I think that would be great.” I asked Anita if she would like to dance: she, too, gave me a quizzical look, but said yes. I instructed Anita to move her feet left and right rhythmically, to the beat. After setting the beat, we joined in a ballroom frame, with me crouching slightly so that Anita could remain seated. I moved her wheels whichever way her feet took her. We danced the song together, and at the end she was beaming and gave me a kiss on the cheek.

Later, Anita told her son how much the dance meant to me – never before had I witnessed the power that dance can have as a healing ministry.

Since that day, I’ve danced with more residents who are in wheelchairs. For me, it illustrates how our gifts and talents – no matter how good or bad we think we are at using them – can impact a person’s life. Our gifts and talents might be installing a hearing device for a TV, preparing a special dish for a resident, or saving a dance for someone who thought they would never dance again.

CHELSEA OSWALD
St. Clare Commons
Perrysburg, Ohio

Questions for Reflection

Why is creative thinking so important in this story and in our ministry?

What are other implications of this story for our ministry?

“Since that day, I’ve danced with more residents who are in wheelchairs.”
**Suggested Sacred Text**

One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple. For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock. — Psalm 27:4-5

**Sacred Story**

At CHI St. Luke’s Health Lakeside Hospital there is Holy Cross Chapel, which has become a beacon of hope for patients and families. The chapel is situated near where patients and families register and wait for surgery. The ambiance of the chapel reflects calm presence and reflection, meditation and prayer. The hospital chaplain visits the chapel once a week to pray with the patients who are there.

One Thursday afternoon while the chaplain made his visit, he met Mr. Johns, a patient in his 60s who was waiting for his third heart stent procedure. He told the chaplain that he was worried because he saw a reflection of his life before him. He had come to the chapel, written a prayer request, then knelt to pray. He said he had not been close to God in a long time: he had grown up in the Baptist church, but had drifted away. At that moment, he wondered if God would accept him were he to die.

The chaplain told Mr. Johns that he was being prayed for. In tears, Mr. Johns said he had felt God covering him when he entered the chapel. He was reminded of an experience during his days in the Vietnam War, when men around him were dying. One morning when his troop was about to go to the battlefront, his commander took him aside and assigned him to help the chaplain. For the next few months, Mr. Johns worked in the chapel. He saw his colleagues brought in, wounded or dead. God had kept him safe in the chapel in Vietnam. Now, in the Holy Cross Chapel, he was reminded of God’s protection and providence.

Is it true that God hides people in a protected pavilion during times of trouble? Mr. Johns was like the psalmist: he found sanctuary, comfort, courage and peace in the chapel. He thanked God and recommitted himself as he prayed with the chaplain. Mr. Johns, with his third stent, desires to be closer to God from now on. What a joy!

**PAUL PAYWAY**

CHI St. Luke’s The Woodlands Hospital
The Woodlands, Texas

**Question for Reflection**

As you reflect on your life or a specific situation that you find yourself in, do you see meaning and purpose?

“Mr. Johns was like the psalmist: he found sanctuary, comfort, courage and peace in the chapel.”
**Suggested Sacred Text**

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. — Romans 8:28

**Sacred Story**

Have you ever cared for a patient who leaves a lasting mark on your heart? Early in my career, I had the honor of being the respiratory therapist for a patient who was a quadriplegic, had a tracheostomy and was ventilator dependent. Both the patient and his wife were extremely kind, a couple I’ll never forget.

I cared for the patient for several weeks before he passed away. I lost touch with his wife, but often wondered where and how she was.

Recently, I attended a convention where I was approached by a respiratory therapy student. I didn’t recognize her at first; then, she told me that I had cared for her husband. It was my patient’s wife! She thanked me for caring for her husband throughout his illness, and said that the care my colleagues and I had provided to her husband had inspired her to become a respiratory therapist!

I had never before received such an amazing compliment. The moment made me realize that God always has a purpose; and that each day, our work can be so much more than just our work. I am so grateful to be a respiratory therapist, and to work with colleagues who display the compassion of Christ in all that we do.

KATIE OLIVER
CHI St. Vincent
Little Rock, Arkansas

**Questions for Reflection**

Have you ever received the gift of finding out that you touched or inspired someone?

Has someone touched or inspired you in a way similar to this story? If so, have you ever had the opportunity to tell him or her? Please say a silent prayer of gratitude for the person or persons who have touched and inspired you and, perhaps, if you are so inclined, tell them how they have touched or inspired you.
Suggested Sacred Text

Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but those who trust in the Lord, loving kindness shall surround them. — Psalm 32:10

Sacred Story

Sue was a quiet, gentle woman who came to live in St. Clare Commons’ assisted living area. At age 94, Sue was ready to accept that she needed help with everyday tasks. She smiled often, and when she did, her whole face brightened.

After some months, Sue needed to go to the hospital for tests. After many tests, she received the surprising diagnosis of cancer. She returned to St. Clare Commons to be with her friends.

I visited Sue to welcome her home. As usual, she was peaceful and gracious. As we talked, Sue mentioned that her test results were not yet definite, and more tests would follow. Her next visit to the doctor’s office brought a definite diagnosis of ovarian cancer.

Sue told me, “I am 94, I've had a good life and I'm ready to go home.” She clarified that she meant she was ready to go home to God. She listed all of the gifts she had received: a loving family, good friends, and a long life. After some reflection, we ended our time together with a prayer that formed a litany of gratitude.

What peace exuded from this woman! My personal reflection was, who had visited who? Encounters like this are truly a gift of the ministry of pastoral care.

SISTER JOY BARKER, OSF
St. Clare Commons
Perrysburg, Ohio
Suggested Sacred Text

And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick. — Matthew 14:14

Sacred Story

It was just my second day at CHI St. Vincent Hot Springs as the new activities director for the Geri-Psych Behavioral Health Department. I decided to visit each room and meet all the patients and try to see through their eyes in my effort to make their days special.

One of our patients was Chuck, an 86-year-old man who came to us from rehab after having had a stroke. The rehab team had noted some aggressive behavior from Chuck. When I met him, he hadn’t eaten or slept in three days. He seemed lost and disoriented.

I asked him about his family: he mentioned the name Lolli, and said she had just been with him, but now he couldn’t find her. I wasn’t sure if Lolli was a nurse who had helped him, a pet, a friend or a family member.

The next day Chuck still had not eaten or slept, his condition was deteriorating, and he was still looking for Lolli. I did a little research and found out his wife, Laura, was in the ICU at our hospital. She was in critical condition after suffering a stroke. Could she be the Lolli that Chuck was looking for? I asked the nurses if we could take him to the ICU to see his wife, who was in a coma. The nurses were willing to help reunite the couple, though they cautioned that his wife might not even know that he was there.

I called the couple’s daughter, Cindy, to ask her permission to take her father to visit her mother. She was extremely grateful. She also said that she was on her way to the hospital. While I waited for Cindy to arrive, I cleaned Chuck up and combed his hair so he would be ready for his date with his wife.

Once we were all on the way to the ICU, I told Chuck that we were taking him to see Laura. He smiled, and a tear rolled down his cheek. His daughter was teary-eyed and excited, too.

Laura’s nurse greeted us and guided us into the room. Laura was non-responsive, and we wheeled Chuck to the side of her bed. When he saw her, he immediately held her hand. “Lolli!” he said. We helped him stand up so he could lean over and give her a kiss.

Laura’s eyes opened. “Chuck, is that you?” she said. Laura started to pull off her blankets and pull herself over toward Chuck. We helped Chuck get in the hospital bed beside his wife and she hugged him. She saw her daughter and smiled, saying “Cindy, Cindy.”

Laura’s nurse was crying, saying “She came out of a non-responsive coma at the sound of her husband’s voice!” We were literally on our knees with amazement. Laura asked for water and ate a Popsicle as if her stroke had never happened.

After this, both Laura and Chuck improved. They were discharged and are now living with their daughter.

God bless this wonderful hospital and staff for allowing me to be a participant in this beautiful story. It was a reminder that God guides us through every experience if we take the time to hear God’s voice when we listen to patients, like Chuck, who really need to be heard. It was a beautiful reminder of why we are here.

REGENA STRABLE
CHI St. Vincent Hot Springs
Hot Springs, Arkansas

Questions for Reflection

Why is being present and listening so important in this story?

What healing could take place if all of us were truly present, listened and found compassionate ways to meet people’s needs?
A LITTLE SPARKLE GOES A LONG WAY

Suggested Sacred Text

The Lord their God will save his people on that day as a shepherd saves his flock. They will sparkle in his land like jewels in a crown. — Zechariah 9:16

Sacred Story

An elderly lady entered through the front doors of CHI St. Francis Health early one morning. I noticed her walking slowly and unsteadily despite having a cane. I asked her if she would like a wheelchair, and she hesitated, but decided to accept my offer. Once settled in the wheelchair, she told me she was scared and nervous about her appointment that day, and I offered a listening ear.

She noticed the shiny stones on my shoes and liked the sparkle of them. She said, “God must have put those sparkles on your shoes to brighten my day. I can tell that the sparkle in your heart is just as bright. And look at your sparkling smile!” I told her that I must have worn the shoes just for her. She smiled and thanked me for assisting and listening to her.

I had not been planning to wear those shoes to work that day, but something made me choose them. Working here gives me a unique opportunity to witness faith in action; we’re encouraged to bring our faith to work, which enables all of us to see God’s actions in our work.

From now on, I’ll remember to keep a sparkle in my smile at work, because a little sparkle can go a long way.

MARY KAPPE
CHI St. Francis Health
Breckenridge, Minnesota

Questions for Reflection

When was the last time you offered a listening ear? What was that experience like for you?

When was the last time you needed a listening ear and someone truly listened to you? What was that experience like for you?
Cindy's cousin had married and hoped to raise a family, only to find out that she couldn't conceive. Now, the cousin's husband had suffered a severe stroke. He was in our hospital and was not expected to survive.

Cindy said, “I was just explaining to God that I know my cousin needs my support, and I can provide that. Then, I selfishly asked God, who would support me? And, he delivered you.” Now, I was the one who was crying. Cindy thanked me for being kind and headed home to get some things that her cousin needed.

This affirmed that my path is simple. When God calls, I go.

HOLLY TAYLOR
CHI St. Vincent
Little Rock, Arkansas

Questions for Reflection

Was there ever a time when you felt directed to talk with someone in need? Did you respond to that “gentle whisper”?  

What are some ways that you experience communication from/with God?  

The author states, “I believe that God answers prayers.” What do you think about this statement? Are there occasions when you felt that God did NOT answer your prayers?  

There are so many people who are alone or nearly alone in the world. How do we become aware of them and welcome them into our lives?
Suggested Sacred Text

Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare. — Isaiah 55:2

Sacred Story

In the early years of my career in Catholic health care, I heard a remarkable story about a young woman who left a comfortable lifestyle because she felt called by God to serve the poor, marginalized and vulnerable in the streets of Calcutta, India. To me, what was most astounding about her story was that she proclaimed to see Jesus in the eyes of each person she met. I thought to myself, how can she see Jesus in each person’s eyes; what did she mean? What did she know that I didn’t? I had no idea that I would eventually receive the answers to these questions.

Mother Teresa was an ordinary woman who accomplished extraordinary things for the Kingdom of God. Guided by the Spirit, she answered her call. She was sent forth as a spirit-filled leader to serve the least of the least in the healing ministry of Jesus.

Later in my career, I joined the National Mission Group of Catholic Health Initiatives. I learned about our foundresses, the meaning of their charisms and their legacies. I met many gifted, spirit-filled leaders. I also came to better understand our mission, vision, and core values.

Eventually, I felt called by God to mission leadership. Four years ago, I began my theological studies at Aquinas Institute of Theology in St. Louis, Missouri. I learned how Catholic identity, Catholic social teaching and the theological virtues are the foundation for our actions and decision-making.

I was also reawakened to the creation story and the two greatest commandments: to love God and to love your neighbor as yourself. I realized that this is how and why we do what we do in Catholic health care.

I have been forever changed and transformed in the way I look at each person in every relationship, both personally and professionally. And, I now know what Mother Teresa meant when she said she saw Jesus in each person’s eyes! She was referring to their human dignity, rooted in their creation in the image and likeness of God. What a teacher!

Every day, I am grateful for the guidance of many gifted leaders and the Spirit in my work at CHI. I see those of us who work at CHI, trying to do the same as Mother Teresa: that is, to be God’s presence to one another and to those we serve, and to see Jesus in each person we meet.

ROBIN BURROWS
Catholic Health Initiatives National Office
Englewood, Colorado

Questions for Reflection

In what ways have you been blessed by great teachers?

In what ways have you been blessed by those you work with?

In what ways are you God’s presence to those you serve, and do you try to see Jesus in each person you meet?
Sacred Story

When I began my job at St. Leonard nine years ago, I embarked on an adventure I hadn’t known waited for me a few years earlier, when my own parents resided here and I was their primary caregiver. Had I returned to St. Leonard for a reason? The answer I found was, “yes.”

In 1999, my parents moved out of their home of 38 years and into a cottage on the St. Leonard’s campus. I knew that their health problems would eventually require even more attention. In time, both of them transitioned to long-term nursing care.

As they became frailer, I felt helpless because I was unable to help them get back to the life they so desperately wanted to return to. During their last year, there were so many calls from St. Leonard about my parents’ needs that it became hard for me to even answer the phone. I hid my private despair and continued to be a daughter and to take care of my own young daughters as if everything were fine. The compassion of the people who cared for my parents—including doctors, nurses and social workers—lessened the emotional, physical and psychological burden I carried. I witnessed my parents’ return to God’s home within five months of each other.

Often, we don’t understand the lessons of our pain while we’re in the midst of it: but, in time, we learn how to use those experiences to help others.

I would not have believed that a year after my parents died, I would return to St. Leonard as a marketing employee, but I did. Part of my job is meeting with families that have stories like mine. Some stories are similar to others I have heard before; some are unique. Many of the stories are not yet complete, and I have the privilege of helping families find solutions to their challenges as caregivers. That was God’s plan for me all along.

DEBBIE PARRETT
St. Leonard
Centerville, Ohio

Questions for Reflection

Are you open to God’s plan for you? How do you show that you are?
Suggested Sacred Text

Brothers and sisters: Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice! Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near. Have no anxiety at all but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. — Philippians 4:4-7

Sacred Story

When I began working in Catholic health care 42 years ago, I was one of very few laypersons working in the theology and ethics area of Catholic health care. At that time, senior leaders in a Catholic hospital – the CEO, the chief financial officer, the chief nursing officer and certainly the mission leader – were most often women religious.

Today, the ratio of laypersons to sisters in Catholic health care has completely shifted. There are many fewer sisters in leadership today, while the number of laypersons has grown tremendously.

When I began working with the Sisters of Mercy in Farmington, Michigan, my focus was helping them carry on their legacy, traditions and values. That was what Catholic identity was all about. The spirituality of the workplace was a very Catholic spirituality, focused on the rituals and traditions of the Catholic faith.

Today, not only are our leaders more likely to be laypersons, they are also very likely not to be Catholic. They have not had life experience with the rituals and traditions of the Catholic Church. So, the way we define the spirituality of our workplace has changed accordingly. We now broadly define spirituality as striving to give meaning to our work, our lives and our circumstance. That can include our faith experience and traditions, but doesn’t have to.

CHI expects everyone to have a spirituality and to bring it to work. Sometimes, people who are new to us ask me how they can define their spirituality, because they are not sure they have one. I ask them a question: If you were diagnosed with cancer right now, how would you find hope? The answer defines your spirituality. You might find hope in religion and faith rituals, but you might also find it in nature, in your children, in volunteering, or in hundreds of other ways that give meaning to your life, your situation and your circumstance.

Everyone who is part of CHI should know this: no matter whether you attend church or not, no matter what your belief system is, you have a role in carrying on the legacy of our foundresses. To me, Catholic identity is about proclaiming a message, forming a community, and providing caring, loving service. That is what the sisters did: their love and compassion made everyone feel cared for. That’s what all of us associated with CHI do today. As we work to improve health, we also celebrate the dignity and inherent worth of each person we serve. By carrying on the legacy of the sisters, we make it our own.

CARL MIDDLETON
Catholic Health Initiatives National Office
Englewood, Colorado

Questions for Reflection

How do you define spirituality? What are some of the ways you express your spirituality?

What are some of the ways that you express your spirituality through your work?
Suggested Sacred Text

O now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayer that is made in this place. For now I have chosen and consecrated this house that my name may be there forever. My eyes and my heart will be there for all time. — 2 Chronicles 7:15-16

Sacred Story

The day started like any other in telemetry: busy. I knew that two patients would go home before my shift ended, and a third would go for a procedure by mid-morning, so there was quite a bit of paperwork to do. Fortunately, I thrive on a busy day. This is why I became a nurse, to spend my life helping others.

Nurses have been part of my life for as long as I can remember; my mom was a nurse, and as a child I spent lots of time as a patient in the St. Alexius Heart & Lung Clinic. Something along the way grabbed me and guided me to the profession of nursing.

On that busy day, I was also assigned to take care of Monika, an 88-year-old woman who needed a pacemaker. As I began the admission process, Monika told me that she is very hard of hearing, and I faced her so that she could read my lips. As I listened to Monika’s answers to my questions, I heard something else: the voice of Jesus. I allowed it to enter, and to guide me. I saw that Monika was anxious, restless and frightened about having a pacemaker. She wanted her family nearby. With Monika’s permission, I invited the two daughters who had accompanied her into the room while I completed her assessment.

During the next week and a half, I cared for Monika and for her daughters as well. I think they were even more anxious than Monika was. Whenever they had a question, I made every effort to find the best answer. I took care of faxing some papers for the daughters so they could stay with their mom. When Monika was transferred to the ICU, I sought out her daughters to make sure they understood why.

It’s rewarding to take that extra bit of time to meet the needs of patients and their families. I think everyone who works in patient care strives to develop a bond with each patient, and sometimes it blossoms into something really special; a moment of pure grace. That happened with Monika, her family and me. And when it happens, it revitalizes and reaffirms the decision I made to be a nurse.

BRIAN INMAN, RN
CHI St. Alexius Health
Bismarck, North Dakota

Questions for Reflection

How do you hear the voice of Jesus in your life?
When have you experienced a “moment of pure grace?”
Suggested Sacred Text

Elijah said, “Lord, I have had enough. Take my life, for I am no better than my ancestors.” Then he lay down and went to sleep. But an angel touched him and said, “Get up and eat.” He looked around, and there at his head was a scone baked on hot stones, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again. But the angel of the Lord came back a second time and touched him and said, “Get up and eat, or the journey will be too long for you.” So he got up and ate and drank, and strengthened by that food he walked for forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God.

— I Kings 19:4-8

Sacred Story

Deuteronomy 8:10 contains the commandment, “When you have eaten and are satisfied, you will bless the Holy One.” Traditional Jewish rabbinic commentary sees this as the basis for an expanded “Grace after Meals,” which traditional Jews recite in addition to a briefer blessing before eating.

This verse also reflects the important relationship between self-care and gratitude. How often do we feel guilty about enjoying life’s little pleasures? We may think about satisfaction and joy as luxuries, but this text suggests that they are actually necessary in order for blessing to emerge. The great rabbi the Maggid of Mezrich once taught that it is only when we enjoy our own lives that we feel truly moved to work for justice for others so that they, too, can experience joy. If we deny ourselves our own needs, we may be more likely to begrudge them to others. In other words: joy is contagious.

A few days ago, while I was visiting a patient who struggled with severe pain and fear, an old memory surfaced for him and our conversation unexpectedly turned to laughter. As I watched his face transform, I was touched by the healing light that graced us in that moment. As if by instinct, his conversation shifted to a place of gratitude. I remain thankful for the reminder of the power of the Spirit to bring healing and hope when we least expect it.

May our daily work bring each of us moments of joy and nourishment, gratitude and blessing. May we find opportunities to laugh and enjoy life to the fullest. May these lead us to increased compassion for those around us and a deepened commitment to justice for everyone, so that the day may soon come when every human being will know true joy and contentment, healing and hope.

RABBI DR. NADIA SIRITSKY, MSSW, BCC
Jewish Hospital
KentuckyOne Health
Louisville, Kentucky

Questions for Reflection

St. Bernard of Clairvaux is quoted as saying, “You cannot give what you do not have.” How do you keep yourself refreshed so as to be at your best for others?

How might gratitude act to keep you focused on what is good and positive in your life?
Suggested Sacred Text

For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.
— Matthew 18:20

Sacred Story

At a time when the news is splattered with stories about violent clashes between youth and police, CHI’s United Against Violence campaign has inspired collaboration and unity for a peaceful future.

On a fall weekend in 2015, youth ages 14–19 who are involved in CHI violence prevention programs in three communities – Dayton, Ohio; Columbus, Ohio; and Louisville, Kentucky – gathered with community and law enforcement leaders to learn from each other how to prevent violence in their communities.

The young adult focus council of United Against Violence of Greater Dayton, sponsored by Samaritan Behavioral Health, instigated the idea of meeting with youth from other CHI violence prevention initiatives. A community policing conference hosted by the Miami Valley Crime Prevention Association provided the perfect opportunity.

So it was that 28 youth from Dayton, Columbus and Louisville – and from African American, Hispanic and recent African Immigrant cultures, as well as various faith traditions – came together for a weekend.

At the community policing conference, the youth were welcomed and honored for their violence prevention efforts by law enforcement officers and community leaders. A dedicated young adult track had been designed for the conference, in which the youth enhanced their awareness of risky behaviors and learned about appropriate response to active shooter encounters. They also joined law enforcement officers on a special SWAT obstacle course, experiencing a challenging, authentic test of agility and physical skill.

The youth met privately with Dayton’s chief of police to talk about community events, share some of their perceptions and experiences, and ask a broad array of questions about life as a police officer. They also asked about the skills and training required to become a police officer or even an FBI agent. The closing session brought a heartfelt expression of gratitude from law enforcement and community leaders for the youth participation throughout the day.

The weekend was further enriched through conversations between the youth and two members of the Montgomery County Sheriff’s Department who stayed with them. As the weekend evolved, so did their mutual trust and respect. I deeply felt God’s presence in their voices, their faces and the stories they shared. They truly exemplified the vision and hope of a healthy, vibrant community.

As I watched the interactions between these amazing young adults, their advisors, law enforcement and community leaders, I was so profoundly proud of CHI and humbled by the vision of our foundresses and the dedication of our leaders. Our decade-long United Against Violence campaign to prevent violence in the communities we serve is making our country a more peaceful, healthy and unified home for generations to come.

DIANE JONES
Catholic Health Initiatives National Office
Englewood, Colorado

Questions for Reflection

How are you engaging youth to foster peace and solidarity in your family or community?

How can you affirm the contributions that youth are making to create peaceful, inclusive communities?
BREAD FROM HEAVEN

Bread From Heaven

Suggested Sacred Text

Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. — 1 John 4: 11-12

Sacred Story

Did you ever feel that you didn’t know what to do; that you just did not have the answers? When we pray “Thy kingdom come,” we acknowledge that God is in charge. God knows, even if we do not, what we are doing within the divine plan.

Our hospital had just established a Behavioral Intervention Team, and I was at home when I got my first call to a behavioral intervention. Up on the floor, I found that order had been restored quickly. Our patient had loudly objected to her dinner, and a more acceptable selection was on the way.

I knocked on the patient’s door and put my head around to ask if she would like to talk with a chaplain. She was on the phone, and asked if I could come back. Half an hour later I returned; a new dinner was in front of her, untouched. It took just a little empathy about hospital food before she moved on the deeper issues. She hadn’t touched her second dinner, she said, because she couldn’t eat when she was upset. And, she had plenty to be upset about.

She had come into the hospital non-responsive and nearly dead. Now, both of her legs were amputated. Reports from home said her teenage son, with only his older brother there, was being even more rebellious than usual. She recognized that she had become so upset because of all that she figuratively had on her plate, not because of the food that was literally on her plate.

This gave God an opportunity. As we talked, she came to realize that she had turned away from God; but, God might still be working for her good. Indeed, her small town had a pastor who patiently talked her through her concerns and who sometimes helped in practical or even financial ways, all without pressuring her to go to church! Soon, she was talking about how much she would enjoy seeing the happy surprise on his face if she showed up in church that Sunday, which would be Easter Sunday. She had been nearly dead, and now was rising to a new life. She accepted that God was not removing all the hardships from her life, but she saw the joys God provided as well.

We made a plan. She would ask her older son to take her to church, but first she would ask his forgiveness for some things she had said to him. After we prayed, she immediately began to dial her son’s number.

A few days later, I phoned her at her home. She said she struggled with physical pain, but both of her sons were helping her. Her older son had taken her to church. It hadn’t been easy for her to stay for the entire service, but she thought it was important to do so. The pastor was, indeed, surprised and happy to see her; “It was great,” she said. She now had enough faith, hope and joy to continue on God’s path for her.

JIM CUMMINGS
CHI Health St. Elizabeth
Lincoln, Nebraska

Questions for Reflection

You are not told by the author why the woman was brought in unresponsive or why she had her legs amputated. Did you wonder about that when you read the story?

This may have been one of the lowest points in this woman’s life and yet she seemed to find some grace and hope when she was talking with the chaplain. Did you ever experience God’s grace at a low point, or know someone who did?

Patients or others can often be so upset that they lash out at us. How do you handle yourself and those people in such situations?

There is a great need for behavioral health services in our country and people speak of the stigma against mental illness. Have you seen evidence of this?
Suggested Sacred Text

God is not attained by a process of addition to anything in the soul, but by a process of subtraction.
— Meister Eckhart

Sacred Story

I was on the precipice of turning 60, entering the sensational decade of my life. All was well…but was it really? I found myself struggling every day with excess weight. I did not like what I felt, saw or experienced in my body. I had reached a depth of despair and the sickness of my soul gripped every ounce of my being: body, mind, and spirit.

I heard the scripture from I Corinthians call to me: “Are you not aware that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? For the temple of God is holy, and you are that temple.”

If the temple of God is holy, and I am that temple, then I knew I needed serious renovation. I had to rely on others and let them assist in the renovation. And, I had to surrender to God in order to right the relationship with myself, in body, mind, and spirit.

God knew I needed a skilled renovator who was also a gentle soul and a spiritual giant. That’s when I learned my colleague Glenda, is also a wonderful trainer. She invited me to a life of health in body, mind and spirit. “I will ‘be your person’ on the journey,” she said. Her invitation was humbling, overwhelming, frightening; and my response was an all-in “yes!”

What I learned in the next 12 weeks was to wrap myself in the joy of the Lord as my strength. I learned that renovation begins with strengthening the core foundation of body, mind and spirit. Glenda taught me that through nutritional choices, workouts and reliance on God, transformation is more than possible: it is probable.

The progress I made in 12 weeks included a consistent workout regimen, weight loss of 22 pounds, a nutritional plan that eliminated processed foods, 120,900 minutes without chocolate, and daily meditation. Little did I know that in those weeks my heart and soul would be challenged to live more deeply and be open to receive love, in and from every facet of my life. Perhaps most importantly, my soul came out of bankruptcy and was renewed and refreshed in conscious contact with my God.

I believe in the depths of my soul that God puts people – not many, just a few – into our lives at just the right moments. I am standing taller today on the shoulders of Glenda and her ministry of health and wellness.

It is now one year later, 960 ounces lighter and my temple is not yet fully renovated, but I know I can never shut the door again. As frightening as surrender, vulnerability and opening our heart and soul can be, the risk is worth it! “For the temple of God is holy, and you are that temple!”

DIANNA KIELIAN
CHI Franciscan Health
Tacoma, Washington

Questions for Reflection

What are you doing to prevent “sickness of the soul?”

Whose shoulders do you stand on?
**Suggested Sacred Text**

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go. — Joshua 1:9

**Sacred Story**

I recently attended the Foundations of Leadership in Catholic Health Care educational session at CHI’s Englewood offices. I was honored to be invited, but with some level of self-righteousness, I also believed that I already knew a lot about being Catholic due to my Catholic upbringing. My thought was: With years of catechism and Catholic schooling, what could CHI teach me about being a Catholic leader that I didn’t already know?

The main presenter the first afternoon was Edward McCormack, PhD, an exceptionally talented professor from Catholic University of America. As I expected, he focused our attention on a number of biblical stories about the healing ministry of Jesus, all of which were – on the surface – familiar to me.

Then, the unexpected happened.

During a discussion about the story in which Jesus healed lepers, Dr. McCormack explained that Jesus did something that was totally unthinkable at that time: while others ran away at the sight of a leper, Jesus approached them and touched them. And they were healed. This story was not new to me, but at that moment I felt as if I’d had a bucket of ice water dumped on my head.

I need to touch more lepers. I can’t heal them all (or any of them, really, as that is solely the province of Our Lord), but I can’t be afraid to try.

I understood in that moment that we all encounter lepers at work every day. Some may take the form of a difficult situation; others are projects, assignments or tasks that we find especially challenging. I reflected on the many times I’ve rejected the lepers I encounter at work by saying, “That’s not my job,” “I can’t help you,” or “I don’t have time right now.”

We don’t lead or inspire by running from these lepers, we lead and inspire by seeking them out. Whatever the challenge is, it will always be a “leper” if we don’t at least reach out, touch it, and give the Lord the chance to work through us.

That night, some colleagues and I discussed keeping CHI different and unique by doing things that are different and unique. For me, the very fact that I can stop and reflect on that issue is different and unique. At CHI, we have an opportunity to reflect, learn and – most importantly – share with one another. In this way, we can inspire those around us and allow ourselves to be inspired, too.

ADAM WHITE
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**Questions for Reflection**

When was the last time you touched a leper? What was that experience like for you?

When was the last time you reached out for help, and someone helped you? What was that experience like for you?
The patient said I should be very proud of our team.

Catholic Health Initiatives promotes a workplace spirituality in which we can come closer to being aware of our God working with us and through us, even in our most ordinary activities.

How blessed we are to be working in health care. Our lives, if we choose to share them, can be a blessing...

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