



# Sacred stories

TWELFTH EDITION



 CATHOLIC HEALTH  
INITIATIVES®

*A spirit of innovation, a legacy of care.*



Sacred  
stories

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## *Introduction*

Catholic Health Initiatives is pleased to present this 12th edition of *Sacred Stories*. The stories within were lived and written by our employees and medical staff members. They tell of moments of heightened awareness of God's divine presence in our workplace — moments that could be fleeting except for the fact that they are courageously recorded and preserved in these stories.

Each story is prefaced by a selection of scripture or other sacred text. These profound words help to frame each story within the larger context of God's activity and presence in our world. Upon reflection, they help us understand how God can choose to act through us.

Each story is followed by one or more reflection questions. These questions invite individual exploration or group discussion of the story's meaning, leading to deeper understanding.

A structured reflection process using a preface, story and reflection questions can help to expand our understanding of God's presence and the importance of spirituality in our workplace. Through the years, our sacred stories have been used for personal reflection; to begin or end a workday feeling grounded in our mission and vision; or to start a meeting by acknowledging and expressing thanks for the presence of God. Our hope is for these stories to be used in similar ways, and to inspire new authors to document their moments of lived spirituality at work.

## *Foreword*

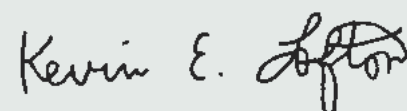
At this time, health care in the United States is delivered in one of the most challenging environments in history. Our employees, medical staff, volunteers and board members across the country provide care at a time when the number of uninsured individuals is growing, the economy is making a slow recovery from a deep recession and the implications of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act are on the horizon.

With these challenges before us, it is more important than ever that we are open to the presence of God's Spirit in our midst.

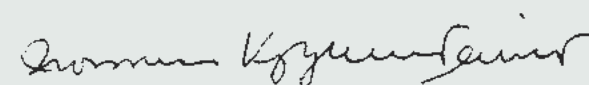
God's Spirit calls us to care for each person who comes to us as if Christ was present in that person. Indeed, that is what we hold true — that Christ is present in every patient, every family member, every visitor, every person that we serve. There are no exceptions. At times, the presence of Christ can be somewhat hidden behind a barrier of pain or suffering, impatience or anger. But, if we are patient and gently persistent, the face of Christ can be revealed in all those we serve.

The stories in this volume are diverse, but they have in common that they are about finding the presence of Christ in others and feeling the presence of God in our daily work. In the course of a busy day, the employees and medical staff members who experience these moments may not have time to reflect on them immediately. We are grateful to those who are able to record their stories and subsequent thoughts on their meaning. Through their generosity and willingness to share, we can all gain insight from these stories.

Whatever challenges come our way, we will continue to see Christ in all we serve and to say thanks for the presence of God. This is what the Spirit calls us to do, and we respond with the best care we can provide and, later, with thoughtful reflection.



KEVIN E. LOFTON, FACHE  
*President and Chief Executive Officer, Catholic Health Initiatives*



THOMAS R. KOPFENSTEINER, STD  
*Senior Vice President, Mission, Catholic Health Initiatives*

## WHEN MISSION TRUMPS LIMITATIONS, A LIFE CAN BE TRANSFORMED

### *Suggested Sacred Text*

*Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. — Hebrews 13:2*

### *Sacred Story*

Steve was admitted to St. Camillus Place, our 14-bed home for people with developmental disabilities. Before his admission, he had been taken to see his physician. The doctor was concerned about Steve: a boy with Down syndrome who weighed more than 260 pounds, with grayish skin and bluish lips from an extremely compromised respiratory system.

Steve was admitted to the intensive care unit at St. Gabriel's Hospital, where many of the staff were concerned that he would not make it. However, his health improved, but not enough for him to return home to live with his parents. He was admitted to a nursing home with the following health problems: borderline diabetes, obesity, sleep apnea, asthma and a need for regular oxygen therapy and monitoring.

Steve's case manager called St. Camillus Place to ask if he could be admitted, but our facility had decertified a bed a year earlier, leaving us with no opening. The case manager shared Steve's story with me. We decided to do whatever it took to get the bed reinstated, a near-impossible task due to stringent state rules and regulations.

I went to the nursing home to meet Steve for the first time. I saw an agitated, obese boy who was not really interested in communicating. He had broken through his room's window screen the night before in an unsuccessful attempt to escape. This was Christ in disguise and in need. The nursing home was eager to move Steve out, and I was just as eager to move him in. Within three days of my visit, Steve came to St. Camillus Place.

The outcome from Steve's time at St. Camillus Place, a structured environment with trained staff, was amazing. Just six months later, we had a wonderful young man with a great sense of humor; a healthy person who was within his weight goal, whose asthma was controlled thanks to medication, and who was free of diabetes and apnea symptoms.

A few years later, Steve was a happy high school senior with friends. He had learned to be pretty self-sufficient and independent, and he had received his family's love throughout all of his challenges.

Today, seven years after high school, Steve is still healthy, happy and social. He is now working locally in a supported employment position. I still find myself amazed at the difference that seeing Christ in others and living our mission can make in the lives of the people we serve.

BARB MILLER  
*Unity Family Healthcare  
Little Falls, Minnesota*

### *Questions for Reflection*

*In your ministry, what person or situation is challenging you to show a bolder hospitality?*

*What might transformation through your bolder hospitality look like to others?*

“This was Christ in disguise and in need. The nursing home was eager to move Steve out, and I was just as eager to move him in.”

## CALLED TO HELP

### *Suggested Sacred Text*

*Do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.*

— *Philippians 2:4*

### *Sacred Story*

On a cold February day, a patient who was receiving radiation treatments pulled into the parking lot in his old pickup truck. When he came inside, he asked one of our radiation technicians where he could buy a tire cheaply, as finances were tight. The technician went to the parking lot to look at the tire and quickly realized that not just one, but all four tires needed replacement. This patient drove 40 miles round trip to receive radiation five days a week, so transportation was vital for his cancer treatment.

The technician came to my office and asked if we could give this gentleman some money from our Tackle Cancer funds. The previous October, students at Kearney High School had raised money to help Good Samaritan Cancer Center patients who struggle financially. Because the fundraiser took place during football season, it was aptly named “Tackle Cancer.” The effort wasn’t directed at cancer patients’ medical bills, but toward daily needs like food, medication, gas, utilities, etc. Because of these students, we were able to help this gentleman buy new tires for his truck so he could safely get to treatment every day.

Words cannot describe the looks of relief or tears of gratitude when we tell our patients, “Yes, we can help.” We have been able to help more than 50 patients and their families with basic needs.

One never knows what avenue God will use to help people who are struggling on their cancer journey. I am thankful that God chose the young angels at Kearney High School to be a part of something bigger than they could ever

“Words cannot describe the looks of relief or tears of gratitude when we tell our patients, ‘Yes, we can help.’”

imagine. As they get older, they will look back and remember that God calls us to give of ourselves to help others. I am thankful that they reconnected me with that lesson, too.

DANA WELSH  
*Good Samaritan Hospital  
Kearney, Nebraska*

### *Questions for Reflection*

*How have you recently been called to give of yourself in helping others?*

*In what ways, unbeknown to you at the time, have you been chosen to be a part of something bigger than you could imagine?*

## WITH HIS HELP, WE CAN ALL BE LIFTED UP

### *Suggested Sacred Text*

*But the souls of the just are in the hand of God, and no torment shall touch them. They seemed, in the view of the foolish, to be dead; and their passing away was thought an affliction and their going forth from us, utter destruction. But they are in peace. — Wisdom 2:23–3:9*

### *Sacred Story*

One of my patients, Lucy, a sweet and kind woman, was dying of congestive heart failure complicated by multiple medical problems, including diabetes and obesity. She eventually was admitted to the nursing home for hospice care. Her family visited regularly.

During a visit from her family, Lucy was resting comfortably. She was looking up, over her bed, when she suddenly exclaimed, “Oh, honey, I have missed you so much! No, you can’t pick me up; I’m much too heavy for you.” With that declaration, Lucy went into a coma and died the next day.

Lucy’s family told me that her husband had died a few years earlier. They believe, as do I, that her husband had come to take her home with him.

As a physician, I am taught to believe in empirical evidence. But, Lucy’s story is one that people, including me, need to hear to remind them of the importance of faith in this world, in the world to come and in the caring we provide. With God, all things are possible.

GREG MCNAMARA, MD  
*St. Gabriel’s Hospital  
Little Falls, Minnesota*

### *Question for Reflection*

*Christians believe in the “communion of saints and life everlasting.” To what extent does this important tenet of faith influence the way you live and care for others?*

“Oh, honey, I  
have missed you  
so much! No, you  
can’t pick me up;  
I’m much too  
heavy for you.”

## ONE LAST KISS

### *Suggested Sacred Text*

*As regards specific times and moments, brothers and sisters, we do not need to write you; you know very well that the day of the Lord is coming like a thief in the night. — I Thessalonians 5:1-2*

### *Sacred Story*

With sad eyes and frustration on his face, Vince penned “I want to kiss my wife.” As chaplain for the intensive care unit, I had supported Vince and his wife, Fran, since his arrival almost one month before. When he arrived, he had some bleeding. Twenty-four days and several operations and intubations later, he was still bleeding. The family was tearful as they wrestled with their emotions — holding on to hope, attempting to deny reality. Another procedure was scheduled for the afternoon and the patient was being prepped.

As I sat with the family in the consultation area, I noticed nurses and doctors running towards Vince’s room. I excused myself and followed. Vince had self-extubated. I asked Fran to speak with the doctor about her husband’s care. Knowing the trauma her husband was experiencing, Fran bravely repeated to the doctor what she had told me a few days before: “There are worse things than death,” she said. “Let him go.”

But Vince didn’t die, at least not until a few days later. He was cleaned up and put on a venting mask to help his breathing. I accompanied Fran and their daughter to his room. Vince took off the mask, and I understood what he wanted to do. As I lowered the bed rail, Vince lowered his bride’s face to his and gently kissed her cheek. Everything he needed to say was wrapped in that kiss. An overwhelming feeling of peace enveloped the room.

That feeling of peace continued throughout the day as Vince joked with the nurses, recounted stories with his loved ones, and got to see his son and family from Florida. Before I left for the evening, I spoke with Vince. He took my hand and thanked me for helping him. “Without you,” he said, “I might have left this world not remembering the last time I kissed my wife. Thank you.”

I cried on my way home from work. Surely Vince and his family had touched me, but was there more to my tears? My thoughts went to my husband, who went to live with the Lord earlier this year. The suddenness of his death had robbed us of sharing one last kiss. As tears trickled down my face, I realized that the Spirit had presented me with a gift. Today, I experienced my last kiss.

KATHY EDELMANN

*St. Joseph Medical Center  
Towson, Maryland*

### *Question for Reflection*

*What in life do you consider precious, and are therefore grateful for?*

“Everything he needed to say  
was wrapped in that kiss. An  
overwhelming feeling of peace  
enveloped the room.”



## WORKING WHERE I'M MEANT TO BE

### *Suggested Sacred Text*

*We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.*

—Romans 8:28

### *Sacred Story*

I was a “stay-at-home” mom for several years, but in 2001 I decided to go back to work. I prayed about where to apply for a job, and through that prayer was led to Saint Joseph-London. I applied for a position, but nothing was available. The following week, I applied again. I continued to apply for the next three weeks. I didn't look for a job anywhere else, because I knew this was where I was meant to be.

Recently, I was reminded of this when we celebrated the Spirituality at Work feast day. We were asked to submit our thoughts on our experience of spirituality in our everyday work. I immediately thought about how exceptional it is to work where we have the freedom to support each other, our patients and their families in prayer; to work where we are encouraged to witness to God's love and compassion as part of our daily ministry. This is not a job, this is a special calling. We are each blessed to be a part of this life-giving experience.

Nine years after I joined Saint Joseph-London, I still know this is where I belong. Through those I meet each day, I am reminded of the God who lives in me and works through me, not always in the profound but in the simple everyday.

SANDY JOHNSON

*Saint Joseph – London*

*London, Kentucky*

“This is not a job, this is a special calling. We are each blessed to be a part of this life-giving experience.”

### *Questions for Reflection*

*What resonates with you in this story? Do you recognize a call to the work you are currently doing?*

*Have you reflected lately on your callings, the big ones and the little ones?*

## ATTAINABLE DREAMS

### *Suggested Sacred Text*

*Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in every one.*

—1 Corinthians 12:4–6

### *Sacred Story*

I have enjoyed the privilege of witnessing the transformation of some dedicated students who have participated in a work/study program in the Catholic Health Initiatives national office in Denver. This transformation is certainly more than students learning new skills that will benefit them in the workplace. It involves the generosity of so many members of the Administrative Support Group and others who empower the transformation of these students into successful college candidates. For virtually all of these students, college would be an unattainable dream without a degree from Arrupe Jesuit High School and the experience they gain through the work/study program with Catholic Health Initiatives.

The students are enrolled in Arrupe, which is a college preparatory high school designed primarily to serve economically disadvantaged students from the inner city of Denver. For the seventh consecutive year, Catholic Health Initiatives is honored to serve as a corporate work/study sponsor.

Arrupe's Corporate Work/Study Program provides the financial backbone that makes the school's highly successful education possible. Students earn the majority of their tuition by working five days per month at a variety of jobs in the Denver metro area, including several Catholic Health Initiatives and Centura Health facilities. One hundred percent of the members of Arrupe's class of 2009 were accepted into college, and they collectively were awarded scholarships totaling more than \$3.4 million.

While they achieve academic success, perhaps a greater achievement is the personal transformation of the students. They become more professional and develop interpersonal skills that integrate the values of their Jesuit education with the workplace spirituality that is modeled by their mentors at Catholic Health Initiatives.

A key to the success of the work/study program at Catholic Health Initiatives is the generous service and professionalism demonstrated by the members of the Administrative Assistants Group and other professionals who serve as mentors for the students. They live our healing ministry with such compassion and reverence that the students become inspired to stretch their personal and professional goals. Those who have graduated are in the process of becoming professional executive assistants, nurses, doctors, teachers and future leaders who will continue to model the healing ministry of Christ that they learned as part of the spirituality of the workplace of Catholic Health Initiatives.

ALAN E. BOWMAN

*Catholic Health Initiatives*

*Denver, Colorado*

### *Questions for Reflection*

*How has God gifted you and how do you use those gifts to serve the healing ministry of Catholic Health Initiatives?*

*How have you mentored others to continue the healing ministry?*

“One hundred percent of the members of Arrupe's class of 2009 were accepted into college...”

## OUR GUATEMALAN PATIENT

### *Suggested Sacred Text*

*And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the law? How do you read?" And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." And he said to him, "You have answered right; do this, and you will live." But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion, and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; then he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed mercy on him." And Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise." — Luke 10:25-37*

### *Sacred Story*

One day in 2009, a very special patient appeared at Memorial Hospital. When he first came, he was weak and his voice was raspy, but he had a story to tell. It was a story of pain and near defeat, but it was also a story of help and hope.

The patient told us he had known for a long time that something was wrong. "I went to doctor after doctor and emergency room after emergency room and it was always the same," he said. "I would wait for hours and they would tell me that nothing was wrong. They wouldn't listen to my questions or try to help me. All they saw was another Guatemalan who didn't speak much English. After weeks like this, I begged God to take away the pain or let me die."

Just as the patient reached the end of his rope, an American friend took him to another doctor. That doctor told the patient that he was very sick with leukemia and needed to get to a hospital right away.

"I was afraid to go to another hospital," he said. "I thought that they would just make me wait for hours and then tell me to go away. But, my American friend told me that he was going to take me to his hospital, to Memorial, and that they would take care of me."

Tears shone in his eyes as a smile wrapped around his face. "The doctors and nurses care for me here. They listen to me and answer my questions. They take time with me and help me understand what is going on. I can feel that this is a Christian place, a place where God is served, by the way that I am served."

For the next year, Memorial Hospital continued to care for this special patient, battling the leukemia, helping the patient and his family through the maze of paperwork needed for documentation and insurance, providing spiritual support. We came to know and love this gentle man and his young family. Unfortunately, despite our best efforts and prayers, the oncologist reached the end of treatment options and the patient was discharged home with hospice care.

I went to see the patient one last time before he left the hospital. Weak from the long struggle with cancer, he had a message to share: "Please tell everyone thank you and that I am praying for them," he said. "Thank God for Memorial!"

Yes, thank God for a place where all are treated with compassion and excellence; where everyone is encouraged to look beyond the readily apparent to see the face of God in those we serve. May we always serve all who come here as if we are serving God.

BETSY KAMMERDIENER

*Memorial Health Care System*

*Chattanooga, Tennessee*

### *Questions for Reflection*

*Think of a time when you were trying to get someone to listen to you about a concern and you did not feel that the listener was hearing you. How did that make you feel?*

*Now, think of a time when the listener not only heard you but acknowledged how you felt and registered that you were worried, scared, in pain or whatever the situation was. How did that make you feel?*

*When people come to you for help, what is their experience?*

## LIKE A GRAIN OF WHEAT

### *Suggested Sacred Text*

*Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted. — Matthew 5:4*

### *Sacred Story*

Sometimes, the healers need healing. Sometimes, caring for patients heals the healers. This is what happened last January when 47-year-old Larry was admitted to the intensive care unit at St. Clare Hospital with H1N1 flu.

Almost no one on staff had much hope for his survival. One reason was the deadliness of the flu, but another was a sickness of spirit among staff members who were grieving the recent and shocking murders of four Lakewood police officers. The staff knew these officers. They were used to seeing them in the emergency department. They were friends, and the entire staff was grieving their deaths when Larry was admitted to the ICU.

For the first week, there was every expectation among the staff that Larry would not survive his illness. A doctor ordered a special bed for Larry that would place him in a prone position. The staff had not seen this type of bed before. Some saw it and said, “Really? That thing’s going to make him better?” After the second week, some began to think, “Well, maybe he might possibly live.”

Under the heavy burden of their grief and the daunting odds against Larry’s recovery, the St. Clare ICU staff kept their focus, attention and commitment to Larry’s care. They kept faithful to their covenant of care while enduring their own dark night of the spirit.

As Larry gradually began to heal, so did the ICU staff. Giving of themselves in compassion and faithful excellence brought about Larry’s healing, and his healing accomplished theirs. In giving of themselves, just like the grain of wheat, their spirits found rebirth.

*“Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit.” (John 12:24)*

DAVID RAPP

*St. Anthony Hospital  
Gig Harbor, Washington*

“In giving of themselves, just like the grain of wheat, their spirits found rebirth.”

### *Questions for Reflection*

*Who recently has brought renewal to your life?*

*Recall and share a time when you experienced healing through helping others.*

## ANOINTING OF THE CHAPLAINS

### *Suggested Sacred Text*

*Is there anyone sick among you? He/she should ask for the presbyters of the church. They in turn are to pray over him/her, anointing him/her with oil in the Name of the Lord. This prayer uttered in faith will reclaim the one who is ill, and the Lord will restore him/her to health. — James 5:14-15*

### *Sacred Story*

In early May 2010, a surgeon informed me that I probably had breast cancer. A lumpectomy was scheduled for a week later. It was a week when I experienced how cancer strikes at the heart of a person.

“What is inside me, and how bad is it? How fast is it growing? What will my future look like: chemo, radiation, nausea, hair loss, wigs or head scarves? And why, Lord?”

Two days after the surgeon’s news, the Franciscan Health System chaplains held a peer group meeting. I was invited to share my story. I knew I could trust my fellow chaplains, so I began to share, and they listened with their hearts and souls.

I must have spoken for half an hour when I noticed one of the chaplains pulling out a small vial of anointing oil. “Jane, is it okay if we pray for you?” she asked. “Yes!” I answered. “There can never be too much prayer!”

The five chaplains gathered around me, laying their hands on my shoulders. I could already feel their support and presence. As she prayed, the first chaplain opened the vial and finished her prayer by making the sign of the cross on my forehead with the oil.

She passed the vial to the next chaplain, who also prayed and anointed my forehead with a cross. The vial was passed from chaplain to chaplain, each one praying and anointing me.

My tears began to flow down my face and drip onto my lap. It was such a gentle and holy moment. These precious colleagues created a time and space to invite God into our midst. God was indeed present, and blessing all of us as healing power was requested.

As I cleaned my face before bed that evening, I didn’t want to wash off the crosses. I only washed my face from the eyes down, leaving the crosses for my night’s sleep.

A few days later, the lumpectomy revealed only benign cysts, and I thanked God for the blessing. I will never forget the five crosses on my forehead, and the beautiful memory of a very sacred moment in time.

JANE PROFANT

*St. Joseph Medical Center  
Tacoma, Washington*

### *Questions for Reflection*

*In what ways have you experienced God’s healing in your life?*

*To what degree do you pray for others so that they might be healed by God?*

“‘Yes!’ I answered. ‘There can never be too much prayer!’”

## WITH GOD, ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE

### *Suggested Sacred Text*

*There is an appointed time for everything, and a time for every affair under the heavens. A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to uproot the plant.” — Ecclesiastes 3:1-2*

### *Sacred Story*

I was a bit shocked the first time I met him. Why would a physician close to retirement want to begin a cardiology practice in a small Kentucky town? Would he have the energy and commitment needed? Would his wife be comfortable here? Did he mean it when he said, “I will be here for the next 15 years!”? My skepticism disappeared once Dr. Earl Perrigo began to practice at Saint Joseph-Martin.

We recruited Dr. Perrigo to provide cardiology services here. Our vision was to provide as much care as possible locally, with patients traveling to other Saint Joseph facilities for needed procedures. The full continuum of care would be provided within our system.

In my nearly 20 years in Martin, I have never seen a physician embrace the community as Dr. Perrigo did. He quickly found a condo to purchase, not to rent, showing his commitment to Saint Joseph-Martin. He made friends with key townspeople – the owner of the bottled gas company, the beautician, the banker, the mechanic. The medical staff found him to be extremely responsive; if he was needed during the night, he was there. The housekeeping staff treasured their afternoon breaks with Dr. Perrigo as he took late lunches. Within a month, our employees were sure that Dr. Perrigo should run for the city council!

His enthusiasm, sense of humor, zest for life and humility were rare. In his eyes, every person was a child of God, and all were his equal. He never saw a stranger or failed to interact with the people he encountered. He cared for the person, not just the patient. He personally transported one patient 100 miles for a heart catheterization, and paid the taxi fare for another!

A teacher at heart, he began providing continuing medical education programs, repeating his lunchtime programs for the grateful night shift. For patients with financial needs, we established a fund to provide travel or lodging assistance. Within nine months, we expanded our local cardiology services and provided access to a full continuum of high-quality care within our system!

Suddenly, as quickly as he came to us, he was gone. As Dr. Perrigo and his wife anticipated a vacation, he fell seriously ill. Two weeks later — shortly after he

humbly extended his hands for a blessing in our Spirituality of Work service — Dr. Earl Perrigo passed away, surrounded by his devoted wife, Carlyn, and their daughters, Kari and Christa. Though he intended to stay in Martin, God surely made him a “better offer!”

In his last mission, Dr. Perrigo left a profound impression on Saint Joseph – Martin, our staff and community. Were our efforts to reestablish cardiology services in vain? No – he blazed a trail to be followed, and we are actively recruiting a candidate to continue what he began.

Personally, he showed us how to live. As Jessica Prater, his receptionist, said, “If I can touch as many people in my lifetime as Dr. Perrigo did in nine months, I will be grateful.” He gave us a glimpse of the core of his being: “With God in our work, all things are possible.”

From a memorial tribute, written by Kevin Hall, radiology director, the day after Dr. Perrigo’s passing: “Rest in God, Dr. Earl Perrigo, for your work here on earth is over. You fought a good fight, you finished your course, and you kept the faith. Now there is laid up for you a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, Himself, shall give you, because you loved Him. Amen.”

KATHY STUMBO

*Saint Joseph-Martin  
Martin, Kentucky*

### *Questions for Reflection*

*What will your legacy be? What do you want it to be?*

*What is preventing you from being the person you want to be?*

“Though he intended to stay  
in Martin, God surely made  
him a ‘better offer!’”

## IN THE ARMS OF AN ANGEL

### *Suggested Sacred Text*

*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. — Psalm 46:1*

### *Sacred Story*

On a stormy Sunday night, we received a phone call that Cathy, my husband's sister, had collapsed and was taken to Sts. Mary & Elizabeth Hospital. Cathy was a 48-year-old, strong, fun-loving person fighting her second battle with cancer. She had hosted a graduation party for her oldest son on Saturday. She had seemed fragile, but not dying.

Tornado warnings were posted throughout the state and roads were closed. I called the Kentucky State Police to determine if we could make it to Louisville. The operator told me that it was not safe to travel and we needed to wait. Overcome with emotion, I explained that it was an emergency and we really needed to get to Louisville. The operator responded, "Now angel, you need to get there safely. Wait a little while, and you will be able to travel."

We arrived at Sts. Mary & Elizabeth Hospital at 3 a.m. The staff allowed us to go to the intensive care unit to see Cathy; we knew it was bad.

As my husband and I left the unit, a nurse approached and told us she was Cathy's nurse for the day. She was a member of the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth. I told her that I worked at Saint Joseph Hospital in Lexington, which was founded by the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth. It was very comforting to know that Cathy was in the hands of sister.

Monday was filled with numerous doctor visits and tests, and there was enough information to know that Cathy was dying. The staff took us to a private waiting room to be with other family members.

Our large family was cared for and embraced by the hospital staff. The chaplain came and prayed with us. The staff had turned on the radio to play softly in Cathy's room. The song "In the Arms of an Angel," came on the radio; as it played, Cathy passed away peacefully.

As the nurse and I walked out of Cathy's room, I realized that I had failed to ask her name when she had come on duty. I asked, and she put her arm around me and replied that her name was "Angel."

As a Christian, I know that God is with us throughout every journey. Sts. Mary & Elizabeth Hospital was not Cathy's routine hospital... she was there at God's grace.

SHARON QUINN

*Saint Joseph Hospital  
Lexington, Kentucky*

### *Questions for Reflection*

*What is the meaning you draw from this story?*

*What are the signs of God's presence in this story?*

*"The song 'In the Arms of an Angel,' came on the radio; as it played, Cathy passed away peacefully."*

## EVERYTHING IS FOR A REASON

### *Suggested Sacred Text*

*“Now I will show you the way which surpasses all the others. If I speak with human tongues and angelic as well, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong, a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy, and with full knowledge, comprehend all mysteries, if I have faith great enough to move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give everything I have to the poor and hand over my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient; love is kind.” — Corinthians 13:1-4a*

### *Sacred Story*

One day when I was working on the medical/surgical floor, I had a patient who was battling cancer. She was scared of what was ahead of her. When her family was around, she kept a brave and positive outlook. But it was just her and me that day, and she was having a hard day.

I have had stage four cancer and went through chemotherapy and radiation. Cancer gives you a whole new outlook on life and on being a nurse. God has a purpose for everything in life, and I know God put me in this patient’s path to bring her hope. I shared my story of surviving cancer with her.

“You know how it feels to go through cancer. I feel like I can cry around you, and you will understand.”

It was amazing, the relationship that blossomed after that. She shared that she felt she had to be strong for her family and friends, but she felt so alone. She cried and we talked about the trials of cancer. I know I was able to give her hope.

I felt blessed to be the person she was able to talk to. I felt the Holy Spirit guiding me to help her deal with the emotions of having cancer. She kept saying, “You know how it feels to go through cancer. I feel like I can cry around you, and you will understand.”

I have come to know that whatever happens is in God’s plan, and I can help cancer patients have hope and rely on God to get through difficult times. As I reflect back, I now understand that cancer has turned out to be one of God’s biggest blessings.

ALANA WENDEL, RN

*Mercy Hospital  
Valley City, North Dakota*

### *Questions for Reflection*

*Can you think of a time when you experienced great adversity and it turned out to be a great blessing?*

*Can you name a time when you were the one who needed a shoulder to cry on? Or, a time when you were the one there for someone else? How did that feel?*



## IT'S MORE THAN A NAME TAG

### *Suggested Sacred Text*

*A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. — Proverbs 15:1*

### *Sacred Story*

What started as a simple errand to the store ended up as a moment of truth for Flaget Memorial Hospital, and a sacred story told by a store cashier.

As I stood in a busy checkout line and moved my purchases down the counter toward the cash register, Louise, the cashier, noticed my name tag. "I've always wanted to meet the president of Flaget," she said.

I thought, "Which way will this conversation go? Did she have a positive experience or a negative one? Will she compliment us, or will I hear about what didn't go right?"

Well, I shouldn't have worried. I spent the next several minutes hearing about the wonderful care her husband and her granddaughter had received at our hospital. Her husband had been an inpatient several times during the previous year, and had a recent emergency department visit as well. Louise couldn't have been more complimentary about the care he received. Her granddaughter had also been treated at Flaget and had a wonderful experience. "I tell all of my friends that Flaget is the best place to go," Louise said. "There's no better place in the world."

Too often, we hurtle through our daily activities and don't pause to reflect on the positive impact we have on so many people's lives. I never imagined that my time to "pause and reflect" would be in a checkout line with the very satisfied family member of two of our patients.

Flaget, like all CHI facilities, strives to be the best in everything we do. I could not be more proud to represent the caring work our employees do, day in and day out, for our patients and their families. It builds relationships that we don't even know about until we happen find ourselves in the right checkout line.

"I tell all of my friends that Flaget is the best place to go. There's no better place in the world."

I now make sure that my name tag always faces forward, because it is more than a name tag. It says, "Yes, I'm part of Flaget and proud of it."

BRUCE A. KLOCKARS

*Flaget Memorial Hospital*

*Bardstown, Kentucky*

### *Questions for Reflection*

*When have I been like the store cashier in sharing compliments? How did the experience of sharing compliments affect the other person? How did it affect me?*

## I SAY A PRAYER

### *Suggested Sacred Text*

*And I tell you, ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. — Luke: 11:9–10*

### *Sacred Story*

At Good Samaritan Hospital, I dispatch AirCar: a helicopter that transports patients from accident scenes to Good Samaritan, or from one hospital to a higher level of care at another hospital. I also follow ground ambulances that answer 911 calls and dispatch long-distance ground transports that move patients from hospital to hospital.

We provide these services in rural areas of central Nebraska and northern Kansas. Our services can make a difference when minutes matter. We respond to emergencies with highly trained pilots, nurses and paramedics. Many transports involve people whose lives have changed in an instant and who are facing critical, life-threatening injuries or illnesses.

Knowing that God is only a prayer away is a comfort and strength in facing these emergencies from my seat in our communication center. Prayer and thanksgiving are part of my daily life, at home and at work, because I have witnessed the power of prayer and believe in life everlasting.

While responding to emergencies, I say a prayer for our patients — for God to hold their souls in the palm of His hand, to give them strength to face their injuries or illness. The families of our patients are included in the prayers, as they are either witness to the illness or injury or tending to everyday life when they receive that dreaded phone call or knock on the door.

Our crew is in my prayers, as I ask God to guide them, keep them safe from harm and use their skills to provide the advanced care for which they are trained. I ask God to be with the crews we assist, including rural volunteer ambulance squads, and doctors and nurses in rural hospitals who are determined to save the lives of their neighbors and friends.

As patients come near our hospital, I pray for God's healing force to be delivered to them. When the injury or illness is too great for the human body and the spirits depart to heaven, I pray for their souls as they are greeted by our heavenly Father and all who have gone before them. I feel blessed to be in a place where I can add to the meaning of my work through prayer.

DIANE MILLER  
*Good Samaritan Hospital  
Kearney, Nebraska*

### *Questions for Reflection*

*What special prayer do you have for your patients and their families; for your friends and family?*

*Even though the work you do may seem to be removed from patient care, how can you be a source of prayer and healing for those we serve?*

“I feel blessed to be in a place where I can add to the meaning of my work through prayer.”

## WHAT DOES IT TAKE?

### *Suggested Sacred Text*

*Where two or more are gathered in my name, I am there. — Matthew 18:20*

### *Sacred Story*

November 1 in the Roman Catholic Church is the Feast of All Saints, a day to celebrate the communion of saints. It was, for those of us in the Northern Kentucky office, an opportunity to celebrate the fact that one of our own had joined that communion.

A few weeks before, we lost a friend and colleague, Lisa, to brain cancer. It was a difficult time for those who knew her well. There was an obvious need for us to gather to remember Lisa, and All Saints Day seemed a perfect time to hold a memorial service, to which we invited Lisa's dad.

Mr. Kemme cried and laughed with us and heard some stories about his daughter for the first time. At the end of the memorial service, he asked to speak. He thanked CHI for its generosity to Lisa, especially during her illness; he thanked her friends for being faithful to her to the end. He closed by telling us how extraordinary CHI is as an organization — one that has special people in it and cares about its employees. He was eloquent in his praise and grateful for the love that was given to his daughter. We were humbled by his presence. It was a special moment for all of us, mostly because it was an experience of community that we rarely share.

There were many sacred stories shared that day in no special order or format. There were no metrics or measurement for love given or received; instead, there were moments of vulnerability side by side with moments of strength.

It was a day when we were all the same. We were a community of believers: believing in one another's goodness, sharing in each other's pain, experiencing community as it was meant to be. Lisa's death brought life to us. May she rest in peace.

JEAN M. LAMBERT  
*Catholic Health Initiatives*  
*Erlanger, Kentucky*

“At the end of the memorial service, he asked to speak. He thanked CHI for its generosity to Lisa, especially during her illness; he thanked her friends for being faithful to her to the end. He closed by telling us how extraordinary CHI is as an organization — one that has special people in it and cares about its employees”

### *Questions for Reflection*

*What does community mean to you?*

*How do you make community come alive in your organization/department/space?*

## ENDURING SPIRIT

### *Suggested Sacred Text*

*O Lord, you have probed me and you know me; you know when I sit and when I stand; you understand my thoughts from afar. My journeys and my rest you scrutinize, with all my ways you are familiar.*

*Truly you have formed my inmost being. You knit me in my mother's womb. I give you thanks that I am wonderfully made; wonderful are your works. — Psalm 139 1:1-3, 13-14*

### *Sacred Story*

I recently celebrated my eighth anniversary with Catholic Health Initiatives. During those eight years I have been privileged to work in the Northern Kentucky national office, then at Memorial Health Care System in Chattanooga, and now all across Saint Joseph Health System in London, Martin, Berea and Lexington. I have also visited hospitals in Cincinnati, Des Moines, Tacoma and other places as various roles lead me across our system. Whether in one of our large regional health care centers or in a rural critical access hospital, what impresses me during each of these experiences is the enduring spirit of our founding congregations.

The spirit of the sisters that lives on in each facility suggests to me that our Core Values of Reverence, Integrity, Compassion and Excellence are more than words; they represent a way of living and a way of serving others. It is the Holy Spirit living in each of our employees, leaders, volunteers and physician partners that knits us together as One CHI.

This dwelling of the Holy Spirit in the people of our facilities is a legacy that the sisters have left to us. The enduring presence of God in each of our actions and each of our decisions allows their legacy of care to live on. At Saint Joseph Health System, we call this seeing the “FACE” of Christ in others:

- The Formation of our employees into an awareness of our mission to be God's healing hands and feet in the lives of those we come across.
- The Accountability and ownership we take in the experience we deliver to others.
- The Communication of information and the transparent approach we take in revealing both our strengths and opportunities for growth.
- The ongoing Evaluation of our capabilities, our opportunities and our obstacles as we move toward realizing our vision.

I have witnessed this enduring spirit from my earliest days with CHI, when we gathered in a conference room at the national office to pray for the family of a colleague who had been killed. I witnessed it when seeing a patient in a wheelchair weeping at the statue of our Lord in the lobby at Memorial. And, I witnessed it in the tears shared as hundreds gathered to say farewell to a Saint Joseph-London nurse who left this side of life too soon, leaving a husband to care for two newborn twins.

It is each of our tasks to ensure that the enduring spirit of Catholic Health Initiatives lives on in our own work as we serve those we encounter along the way. May that spirit always dwell within our walls.

KEVIN RICHIE

*Saint Joseph Health System  
London, Kentucky*

### *Questions for Reflection*

*Where is the face of God most present in your workday?*

*Is there a thing, word or action that you use to remind yourself of who you really are?*

“...that our Core Values of Reverence, Integrity, Compassion and Excellence are more than words; they represent a way of living and a way of serving others.”

## ONCE THERE WAS A LITTLE DOG

### *Suggested Sacred Text*

*When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." He then said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." —John 21:15-17*

### *Sacred Story*

Sometimes, we are so busy meeting the immediate needs of our patients that we don't think of the family that is left behind. This is a story of one family member who could not be left alone.

Richard H. Young Hospital had an elderly patient with a long history of alcoholism that had alienated her from her human family. When she came to us, she left her small dog isolated in her trailer home. The patient quickly recovered from her physical issues, but worried about her dog. She felt that she had abandoned the only thing that loved her.

Our team decided that this relationship was important, and to bring the little dog to the hospital see her owner. The patient's community worker brought the dog, but the visit was filled with tears because the beloved little dog was covered with hair mats and boils. The dog's eyes were matted over and its paws caked with mud. The team had hoped the visit would bring cheer and healing, but it only brought more misery and guilt to the patient.

“Sometimes, we are so busy meeting the immediate needs of our patients that we don't think of the family that is left behind.”

The team made a plan, and the patient agreed that a staff member and a volunteer could foster the little dog. The first night, our staff member took the dog home and gave him a bath and treatment for his wounds. The staff member brought the dog to work every day, giving our patient the opportunity to brush the dog and take care of his needs, which made them both very happy. Each night, the dog would go home with our staff member or our volunteer.

As our patient prepared to move to the next level of care, our therapist contacted the staff there and shared the story of the little dog. It was agreed that the dog would be able stay with the patient throughout her ongoing treatment. We have not seen that patient again, but knowing the love she and her little dog have for each other, we believe they are just fine.

TAMI FLESHMAN

*Good Samaritan Hospital's Richard H. Young Hospital  
Kearney, Nebraska*

### *Questions for Reflection*

*What speaks to you in the story and the scripture reading?*

*Are there areas of your life in which you have struggled, "failed" and struggled again?*

*Were you treated with compassion, and did you treat yourself with compassion?*

*It would be easy to lose patience or be judgmental of people like the woman in the story: instead, she was treated with compassion and allowed to include caring for her dog in her healing.*

*How is that "spiritual care?"*

## MORE THAN CUSTOMER SERVICE

### *Suggested Sacred Text*

*For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them.*

— Matthew 18:20

### *Sacred Story*

In the winter of 2008, my hairdresser of many years talked to me about a surgery his ex-wife would soon have at Memorial Hospital. She had been traveling between Chattanooga and Houston for treatment and was nearing the point of “no more options.” Her goal was to live until the following spring to see their oldest daughter graduate from high school. She was coming to Memorial for a complicated palliative orthopedic procedure. I told my hairdresser that his wife would have very experienced people in the operating room to care for her. Our entire orthopedic team is top notch.

The next time I saw my hairdresser, he told me how grateful he was for the “special” care that his ex-wife and the family had received. I could not convince him that I had not arranged anything out of the norm for him and his family!

I asked him what had so impressed him with our care, especially after his ex-wife had been to one of the most renowned cancer centers in the world. He told me how the surgical assistant talked with them before the procedure, explaining what would be done. He described how the nurse in the operating room had called multiple times during the lengthy procedure to keep them updated. He said he could tell that the nurse was genuinely concerned for her patient, their loved one. Finally, he told me how the entire team had come to speak with the family in the waiting room after the surgery. They all introduced themselves and let the family know that they would pray for this special patient.

I had never been more proud of my department and the operating room staff. And, I am proud to work at Memorial, a hospital where associates are encouraged to care for patients and their loved ones as persons and not as just another “case.” I know that my hairdresser and his family will never forget the care and kindness shown to them at Memorial, where this type of caring makes a difference every day!

ANNA SKINNER  
Memorial Health Care System  
Chattanooga, Tennessee

### *Questions for Reflection*

*How can you be a source of healing and hope for patients and their families, even when we can't cure their illnesses?*

*Is there someone in your life who could use some “special” care?*

“I am proud to work at Memorial, a hospital where associates are encouraged to care for patients and their loved ones as persons and not as just another ‘case.’”

## OUR NORTHERN SOUTHERN BELLE

### *Suggested Sacred Text*

*And the Lord said to Moses, “I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name.” — Exodus 33:17*

### *Sacred Story*

Lulubelle had been born and raised in the southern U.S., so when she first entered our hospital in Devils Lake she had many enjoyable moments educating the staff on the differences between north and south, especially when it came to food. The German-Norwegian diet familiar to our taste buds was a far cry from her heritage. Lulubelle truly was the epitome of the “southern belle.”

As her medical problems increased, Lulubelle became well known to many of our staff due to her frequent hospitalizations. She loved hearing about our activities and our families, and would always “catch up” with us during her repeat admissions. She was a well-loved patient — the kind that staff members visit with just for the sheer joy of it.

She would say, “I have been in many hospitals, but there is just something different about this one. I can’t put my finger on it, but there is something different.” She said that she felt comfortable with us from her first admission. I told her it was the Holy Spirit working through us and with us.

After years of breathing problems that increased in severity and frequency, Lulubelle made a decision. She told the staff, “You know me, and I know you. And if something does happen, I want to die among all of you.”

Lulubelle kept her positive, outgoing personality until her death. And, she did get her wish. She died at our hospital, where she knew us, and we knew her.

DONNA LANGTON

*Mercy Hospital*

*Devils Lake, North Dakota*

### *Question for Reflection*

*How do I intentionally take time to get to know those I serve and serve with?*

“You know me, and I know you. And if something does happen, I want to die among all of you.”

## PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY

### *Suggested Sacred Text*

*“I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. If you have love for one another, then everyone will know that you are my disciples.”*  
—John 13:34-35

### *Sacred Story*

It was a typical Monday, and I began my morning as I usually do, by saying hello to everyone in the office.

This particular Monday, I noticed that a co-worker was crying. I asked her what was wrong, and she told me that her husband had received bad news about his health.

Saddened by her news, I drew on my training as a parish nurse and began to think of ways I could help. I remembered learning about prayer shawls, and that prayers are said during the making of the shawl. They help those in need of comfort and prayer in times of trial. This day, I knew someone in great need of prayers.

A prayer shawl had been blessed the previous Sunday at my church. I made a quick phone call, hoping I could pick it up on my way home that evening and bring it to my co-worker the next day. Instead, I was told that it would be at my office within the hour.

When I gave my co-worker the shawl, she cried and said, “I prayed something good would happen, and it did! How did you get it here so fast?”

“When you’re in need, God is there,” I said.

Later that morning, I saw my co-worker wrapped in the shawl, as if God had wrapped her in love and prayers. Later, she went home and wrapped her husband in the shawl and prayed for his recovery. We don’t yet know the outcome of his condition, but we do know that God is wrapping them both in love and comfort.

Everyone hopes that at some point in their lives they can make a difference for someone else. That Monday was my day to make a difference through my new prayer shawl ministry. I thank God for the opportunity to become a parish nurse through the program at Memorial Hospital. I can honestly say that becoming a parish nurse has changed my life.

CAMMIE JOHNSTON, RN  
*Memorial Hospital  
Chattanooga, Tennessee*

### *Question for Reflection*

*“When you are in need, God is there.” Can you think of examples in your life when you have experienced or observed this?*

“Everyone hopes that at some point in their lives they can make a difference for someone else.”



## FINDING THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE POOL

### *Suggested Sacred Text*

*Thus, Jesus proclaimed, “Whoever drinks some of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty again, but the water that I will give them will become in them a fountain of water springing up to eternal life.”*

—John 4:14

### *Sacred Story*

It was a normal day at the Good Samaritan Hospital therapy pool, with patients coming and going, receiving treatment for a variety of rehabilitation needs. There was the hustle and bustle of water aerobics classes and water walking, with some participants relaxing in the hot tub after their workouts.

People come to this place, as anywhere, with the concerns of life on their minds. On this day, a gentleman using the facility for water walking seemed unusually quiet and troubled. His pastor was using the pool for some exercise as well. Each noticed the other, and they began to chat about the happenings of life.

The troubled man had previously discussed the possibility of baptism with his pastor, but had not followed through. In the pool, they discussed the topic further. They asked the staff if we would permit them to perform the ceremony that very day, in the therapy pool. Of course! Permission was granted and everyone stopped their normal routine to witness and encourage this gentleman in his baptism.

It is always an honor to witness such an event in a person’s spiritual life; but sometimes, in order to receive the blessing, we must remember that God meets us wherever we are at any given time, circumstance and place. Are we willing to listen to what God makes possible?

JEFF MONTAG

*Good Samaritan Hospital  
Kearney, Nebraska*

### *Questions for Reflection*

*To what extent does Christian Baptism provide guidance and direction for life?*

*How are you able to be aware of God’s presence and listen to God speaking to you in the busyness of everyday life?*

“...sometimes, in order to receive the blessing, we must remember that God meets us wherever we are at any given time, circumstance and place. Are we willing to listen to what God makes possible?”

## IT'S THE COMPASSION THEY REMEMBER

### *Suggested Sacred Text*

*And the King will answer them, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me." — Matthew 25:40*

### *Sacred Story*

At Jewish Hospital & St. Mary's HealthCare, we often speak of our mission to provide world-class health care to all. One fateful week, our entire team was reminded that world-class health care doesn't just mean being high-tech and performing cutting-edge procedures. World-class care is compassionate care.

Jane was a patient at Jewish Hospital and had been in the intensive care unit for a number of days. During her final days, our team members surrounded Jane with their friendship and expert care, including the ordinary, everyday tasks of shampooing her hair and manicuring her nails. From the nursing team to the physicians, unit secretaries, chaplains, respiratory therapists, palliative care team and social workers, everyone treated Jane with the respect we all deserve in a time of need.

Jane passed away, but prior to her death, her mother hugged our nurse manager and said, "Do you know what a great team you have?"

I know the answer to that question. It's "Absolutely." What we provide is not only high-tech, high-quality, cutting-edge care: it's also compassionate, empathetic care. When you come down to it, when a patient or family member leaves the hospital, it's not the new piece of equipment or the brand new procedure they remember. Instead, it's how they were treated.

When I asked our chaplain what his feelings were about Jane, he responded that the face of God is seen through what we do and not what we say. This sentiment was evident throughout Jane's entire stay. The face of God was truly seen by Jane and her family in the actions of the team members who served so gracefully in the final hours of Jane's life.

MARTY BONICK

*Jewish Hospital  
Louisville, Kentucky*

### *Question for Reflection*

*When you consider the teams that you currently serve on, where do you see the face of God as you go about your daily work?*

“What we provide is not only high-tech, high-quality, cutting-edge care: it's also compassionate, empathetic care.”

## OUR SPACE IS HOLY

### *Suggested Sacred Text*

*The angel of Yahweh appeared to Moses in the shape of a flame of fire, coming from the middle of a bush. God said, “Take off your shoes, for the place on which you stand is holy ground.” — Exodus 3: 1-5*

### *Sacred Story*

The decision to move the Denver national office from downtown Denver to suburban Englewood involved multiple discussions, exploration of numerous options, debate of pros and cons, hesitations, reversals and, finally, a commitment on the part of the President’s Council. Though it was an intentional decision and it made good sense, no one deceived themselves into thinking there would not be challenges, inconveniences, disruptions, adjustments and a sense of loss. After all, 1999 Broadway was the corporate office for 14 years!

We all move at some point in life: as children, because of parents’ decisions; for college; to accommodate a growing family; to pursue better career opportunities; or to adjust to an empty nest when we don’t need as much space as before. In any case, the process of deconstructing one home and creating another is a significant transitional event.

Moving is more than the time it takes to sort through long-forgotten files, to rid our wardrobe of clothes we will never wear again or to discard the “stuff” we all collect over time. It is more than the time it takes to unpack, reorganize and adjust to a new space. Moving can stir up feelings of loss and sadness, or hope and optimism – or a combination of all these emotions. When we move, there is always a sense of anxiety – worry about how we will complete our ever-expanding to-do lists. We may fear being overwhelmed by the details but, in time, we learn to adjust and find our place in our new space.

Moving underscores something important about space. The “space” we find ourselves in is more than a backdrop or a stage-set in the drama of our daily life. Our space is more than scenery. Space impacts us on a much more profound level. As in the Exodus story, our space is holy ground. The space where we find ourselves is an important marker of the various phases of our life stories. In fact, we can tell our own life’s story by plotting the places where we have been — where we have worked or lived, even if only for a short time.

We find meaning in the places we live. Every one of the places in our lives evokes powerful memories of happiness and sorrow, of comfort and angst, of meaningful achievements and failures, and of the relationships that — for better or for worse — come to define our lives.

The move to Englewood went smoothly. We were quickly deep into the process of anticipating the commute, getting to know a much larger workforce, and adjusting to a new space that, like so many other spaces in life, would begin to impact and play its part in our journey in life.

TOM KOPFENSTEINER

*Catholic Health Initiatives  
Denver, Colorado*

### *Question for Reflection*

*What place where you have lived or worked has had the biggest impact on you, and why?*

“In any case, the process of deconstructing one home and creating another is a significant transitional event.”

## LOOKING BEYOND HER OWN NEEDS

### *Suggested Sacred Text*

*Be patient, therefore, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains.*

*You too must be patient. Make your hearts firm, because the coming of the Lord is at hand.*

—James 5:7-8

### *Sacred Story*

Sophie was one of those patients for whom you take a deep breath and paste on a smile before entering their room. She had fallen and broken some bones and was not happy about any of it. She had no problem letting everyone know how unhappy she was. It was a struggle to get her to do anything – move, eat, talk, etc. But, our optimistic staff continued to press forward, gently encouraging her. Because of her continued therapy needs, she joined our swing bed program.

It took patience, time and energy, but slowly Sophie got out of her room more and started to participate in our activities for swing bed patients. She even began to attend chapel service.

Our chapel service is interactive: after the readings, attendees are asked to participate in discussing reflective questions. The first few times she attended, Sophie just listened. But, as time went on, she seemed interested and started sharing some bits of her life.

Then, it happened. One of the attendees, Mabel, was telling the group how hard her journey to recovery had been. As Mabel told her story, she began to cry. Sophie listened intently. As Mabel finished her story, Sophie said, “Mabel, I am sorry your recovery is going so slowly. I will pray for you.”

For Sophie to look beyond her own needs was a gift to us all, but especially to herself.

CONNIE WHITNEY

*Mercy Hospital*

*Devils Lake, North Dakota*

### *Questions for Reflection*

*How can you reach out to the “Sophies” in your care?*

*How can you encourage and support those people in your life who need hope and healing?*

“As Mabel told her story, she began to cry. Sophie listened intently. As Mabel finished her story, Sophie said, ‘Mabel, I am sorry your recovery is going so slowly. I will pray for you.’”

## A SIGN OF PEACE

### *Suggested Sacred Text*

*But now, thus says the Lord, who created you, O Jacob, and formed you, O Israel: Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name: you are mine. When you pass through the water, I will be with you; in the rivers you shall not drown. When you walk through fire, you shall not be burned; the flames shall not consume you. For I am the Lord, your God.” — Isaiah 43:1- 2a*

### *Sacred Story*

It was near the end of winter. I could feel spring in the air that afternoon as I walked around the hospital with my camera, trying to record the beauty of my new workplace in the fading afternoon light. I was deep in reflection, wondering how things would go as I settled into my new job. Part of me was saying “I’ll be fine;” another was asking, “Show me a sign that I will be okay here, that I will be at peace here.”

As I took pictures, I stopped every now and then to review what I had just taken. Something caught my eye. I noticed that two of the pictures that I had taken of the same cross, less than a minute apart, were curiously different. I froze in my tracks to study them: did I really see a glow in the middle of one photo of the cross and not in the other? I stood there for a bit, pondering what had caused the glow to appear. Then, I remembered that I had asked for a sign. I looked up with a smile and imagined that my supreme being was smiling back at me, saying, “Here is your sign!”

I’m sure a professional photographer could have provided a technical explanation for the glow. I had no need for a technical explanation for how that beautiful glow appeared.

I sometimes wonder what God has in store for me, as I did that afternoon. I wonder what God’s plans are and how I fit into those plans. I can get discouraged when things are not perfect the way I want them to be perfect. There are times I look for signs, as I did that afternoon, to confirm my thoughts and feelings. When I look hard, I see abounding signs that tell me I am blessed and am okay, and the things that I refer to as “imperfections” in my daily life appear less imperfect. I know I fit into God’s plan here.

I’ll remember that we are all perfect in our Creator’s eye. God’s plans for us, though we do not fully grasp them at times, are individually tailored. God knows all my needs. I am keeping my eyes open for those signs. Have you seen your sign today?

RAYNETTE MAE AMILING, RN

*St. Anthony Hospital*

*Gig Harbor, Washington*

### *Questions for Reflection*

*Have you seen your sign today?*

*When was the last time you felt called by the Creator?*

*Are you in the right place? How do you know?*

“I wonder what God’s plans are and how I fit into those plans.”

## ANGELS AMONG US

### *Suggested Sacred Text*

*As they continued their journey he entered a village where a woman whose name was Martha welcomed him. She had a sister named Mary (who) sat beside the Lord at his feet listening to him speak. Martha, burdened with much serving, came to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me by myself to do the serving? Tell her to help me." The Lord said to her in reply, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her." — Luke 10:38-42*

### *Sacred Story*

It was a typical Monday in our Emergency Department. Ambulances came in one right after the other. We knew it was busy, but we didn't know it would be a day that would touch all of our hearts.

As I sat at the triage desk, a young gentleman ran in from the parking lot. I asked what I could do to help him. As he tried to catch his breath, he said, "The ambulance just brought in my mother; she collapsed in the parking lot." I asked him to have a seat and wait while I checked to see if he could be in the exam room with her.

The man's mother had been intubated, and the doctors and nurses had started measures to try to save her life. I returned to my desk and called the hospital chaplain. After hanging up the phone, I looked up to see a woman sitting with the patient's son. They were talking about what had happened to his mother, and I realized that they previously had not known each other. Under the worst of circumstances, they had become acquainted. The woman, Jan, had been present when the man's mother collapsed and had offered her help.

As I listened to the conversation between the patient's son and Jan, my heart started to melt. Jan had previously worked for our organization as a social worker. She sat with the man, offering as much comfort as she could. She said she had been through a similar situation herself. I'll never forget the words she said to him: "I couldn't bear to let you be here by yourself during a time like this. You're numb to what is going on, and you are looking for answers."

Soon, the chaplain arrived and escorted the patient's son and Jan to a consultation room to pray and wait. Soon after, the sister of the patient arrived. The news about the patient was not good: indeed, she had passed away. Her sister had lost another sibling just a few months prior, and her son was an only child.

It is not death that makes this story sacred; it's the people, or rather the angels, who were involved. Not often do you find everyday people doing what Jan did. Through this experience, I have no doubt that there are angels among us, doing God's work with us.

ELLEN CARR

*Saint Joseph Health System  
Lexington, Kentucky*

### *Question for Reflection*

*How can we ensure that we care for our patients and their families in body, mind and spirit, even when facing death?*

*In the fast pace of our lives, how can we pause and be more attentive to the needs of others?*

“As I listened to the conversation between the patient's son and Jan, my heart started to melt.”

## THE LATE NIGHT MIRACLES OF SEPTEMBER 9

### *Suggested Sacred Text*

*Christ has no body now but yours, no hands, no feet on earth but yours; yours are the eyes through which he looks with compassion on this world... Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, you are his body. — St. Teresa of Avila*

### *Sacred Story*

It is the miracles that count. We were just the ones chosen to tangibly convey God's love and grace, hope, faith and healing presence in the wee hours of September 9 in an operating room at St. Joseph Medical Center. I am a chaplain, one of the team that came together that night.

It was after midnight when I was told there was a young woman who had given birth to a healthy nine-pound son and was now hemorrhaging beyond control. The medical team in the operating room was working against declining odds to stop the bleeding. Her family was pacing the hallways, sobbing and angry, blaming and guilt-ridden. They were frightened that her life might pass, leaving them alone and grieving all too soon.

The surgeon communicated with the family herself and sent a nurse to give regular updates. She was honest with the family about the seriousness of the situation. The feeling was that, short of a miracle, there was little hope. The surgeon suggested prayer.

The patient's mother asked if she could talk to her daughter, as there were things she needed to say to her. The surgeon's response was surprised but affirmative. The mother and I passed together across the hall, through the heavy double doors and on toward the operating room.

Earlier that night, the patient's mother told me she had been a person of faith until seven years earlier, when her son died. She had been angry with God ever since. "I prayed seven years ago, and he died," she said.

We entered the operating room and I saw the beautiful young woman with flowing dark hair. Her mother bent down and spoke to her daughter lovingly and firmly. Then, we prayed together for healing. The rest of the team prayed, too. The patient's mother and I prayed that God would use the team's years of training and skill to bring wholeness and healing.

“The patient’s mother and I prayed that God would use the team’s years of training and skill to bring wholeness and healing.”

After that visit to the operating room, the young mother's situation began to turn around. The team was able to slow the bleeding. A few hours later, the patient was moved to recovery, then to intensive care. The next day, she was able to write messages to her family, and soon she met her beautiful new son. What joy!

There were many miracles that night: a young mother who was returned to her family; her mother's return to faith; and the gathering of skilled and compassionate men and women, committed to healing, who worked together seamlessly, united as the healing hands of Christ.

JENIFER TAPLEY  
*Saint Joseph Medical Center  
Tacoma, Washington*

### *Question for Reflection*

*Looking back, what joys or blessings have you witnessed while working with others, united as the body of Christ?*

## WOMEN AND SPIRIT

*The Mission of Catholic Health Initiatives is to nurture the healing ministry of the Church by bringing it new life, energy and viability in the 21st century. Fidelity to the Gospel urges us to emphasize human dignity and social justice as we move toward the creation of healthier communities.*

— Mission Statement of Catholic Health Initiatives

### *Sacred Story*

There were perhaps 80 of us: members of CHI's Board of Stewardship Trustees, representatives of the founding congregations, senior leadership, staff, and family members who boarded two buses that December morning. We had journeyed to New York City to share in our responsibility for CHI, conduct board business, and take a day to visit Ellis Island. There, the traveling exhibit "Women and Spirit" would, without my knowing it that morning, bring me closer to our mission, ground me in a new spirituality for my personal and professional journey, and open my eyes to the 21st century responsibility inherent in the CHI mission statement.

At the ferry station to Ellis Island, the 30-mile-per-hour, frigid winds could not compete with the joyous anticipation of our visit. The ferry was tossed by the chop of the Hudson River, which challenged our bodies and spirits and brought different degrees of nausea to the group as we headed first to the Statue of Liberty, then on to Ellis Island. For a time, my wife and I braved the winds on the top deck to share the sights with many of our group. The cold slap of wind seemed to wake us from our comforts and humble us with the sacrifices of those who built our country in the past. Walking up to Ellis Island, our group split into several smaller units and began exploring.

It was my first visit to Ellis Island. We discovered the story behind the more than 30 million immigrants who came to the U.S. from all across Europe and Africa. They endured hardship, were separated from loved ones, and failed 10 percent of the time to pass the immigration standards to enter this country. In thousands of instances, they died on this tiny island without realizing their dream of a better life. At the end of our tour, we reconvened in the three-story grand hall, its quiet echoes juxtaposed with the historical din of the millions who had been there before us. As instructed earlier, we moved on to an exhibit in a third-floor alcove off the great hall.

The "Women and Spirit" exhibit chronicles the more than 600 congregations of women religious that came to the U.S. beginning in the early 1700s to faithfully provide education, health care and social services. In story board after story board, the history unfolded. Most had come to the U.S. via Europe, responding to the call of the Church and local Bishops. These middle- and upper-class women abandoned their lifestyles of comfort to provide others with care and education.

I do the exhibit no justice in this brief rendition, but wish to share the awe and admiration instilled in me that day. The exhibit's photos, artifacts and writings chronicled a story of selflessness, response, personal subjugation to community need, nurturing of orphans and those too ill to survive, hardship, living conditions and territory challenges that would today be characterized as unbearable. Whole congregations uprooted when called, travelling thousands of miles and tating, baking and sewing to raise funds for school buildings. The sisters met outbreaks of pestilence and war with a "change management" process that began and ended with a mere "we need to do this." Virtually overnight, many congregations shifted from education to health care in response to the yellow fever, flu, smallpox and other epidemics that struck their communities. Women religious nursed hundreds of thousands of wounded Civil War soldiers, were the first to integrate Catholic hospitals in the South, and responded to the high number of orphans created by war by providing loving care and homes to those in need.

We ended the day with sacred stories of the congregations of women religious that created Catholic Health Initiatives. Some of the stories were ironic, some were funny, and all had a deep reverence for responding to need. Their modern sacrifice – the transfer of their history, assets and legacy to a public juridic person in order to carry Catholic health care into the 21st century – rivals those of their ancestors chronicled in the "Women and Spirit" exhibit.

Since leaving Ellis Island, a spiritual space has opened within me, filled with sacrifice, humility, faith and devotion to those in need. Our mission looms larger, with a vitality of meaning, a resonance of a sort, deep within my inner self, carrying me on the shoulders of those who came before. I am energized in my work by a new life, energy and vitality that during this experience transformed words to spirit.

STEPHEN MOORE, MD

*Catholic Health Initiatives  
Denver, Colorado*

### *Questions for Reflection*

*When you hear the stories of the founding congregations, what leadership characteristic impresses you most?*

*How do we carry that characteristic forward today?*



## HERE FOR A REASON

### *Suggested Sacred Text*

*For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven. — Ecclesiastes 3:1*

### *Sacred Story*

As a single parent, I became a registered nurse to support my three boys. Although I had compassion to give, paying the bills was my number one priority. I believed the science of nursing laid the foundation for a profitable career.

One night, I was asked to help out in oncology for awhile instead of working in the Intensive Care Unit. Reluctantly, I agreed.

My first two patients were managing fine, but the third shocked me. He was a 35-year-old man with an oxygen mask who was struggling to breathe. His fiancée told me he had terminal cancer. She had her Bible out.

I bent towards the patient to begin my scientific nursing assessment when I noticed a medal on a silver chain lying close to his heart. I touched the medal. Having been raised a Catholic, I recognized it as the “Miraculous Medal” worn by those devoted to praying the Rosary. His fiancée said, “I forgot to bring his rosary from home, and now it’s too late. I don’t think he has much time.”

She was right. The patient was in a semi-conscious state. I fumbled in my pockets to find a pen to write down his vital signs when my fingers felt a familiar object. I grasped the beads on a cotton string, which was attached to a plastic cross. The rosary had been given to me by a patient after I had been a nurse for only a few weeks. Since then, I kept it in my pocket to help protect me against making a medication error.

I pulled the rosary out of my pocket and was embarrassed to see how dirty and worn it was. I offered it to the man’s fiancée while apologizing for its appearance. “Don’t be embarrassed,” she said, as tears rolled down her face. She placed the rosary in her fiancé’s folded hands. I heard her trembling voice begin, “I believe in God, the Father Almighty...”

My time in oncology was up and I returned to my main assignment in the ICU. Two days later, the nursing supervisor came to me with a white envelope that had been delivered by a patient’s family. I opened the envelope to find my rosary, which had been cleaned to perfection, along with a note. It said, “Thank you so much. John passed on peacefully shortly after praying the Rosary. You were there for a reason.”

From that day, I have embraced the belief that each of us is here for a reason. This moment, this time, this place, are designed by God to shower grace upon others through our devoted service.

ZOEY DERING, RN

*St. Anthony Hospital  
Gig Harbor, Washington*

### *Questions for Reflection*

*How is God’s grace present in this story?*

*How has your service and/or the service of your team showered God’s grace upon others?*

“I heard her trembling voice begin, ‘I believe in God, the Father Almighty...’”

## OPENING THE DOOR

### *Suggested Sacred Text*

*In harmony, may I walk.*

*With harmony before me, may I walk.*

*With harmony behind me, may I walk.*

*With harmony above me, may I walk.*

*With harmony underneath my feet, may I walk.*

*With harmony all around me, may I walk.*

*It is done in harmony.*

—Navajo Prayer

### *Sacred Story*

When I attended Catholic Health Initiatives' 2010 National Leadership Conference, I was surprised to see a weaver on the stage with her loom. The weaver, Lynda Teller Pete, is a fifth-generation Navajo weaver. She explained that weaving is important in the Navajo tradition for several reasons. First, weaving in the traditional way pays homage to the past. Second, weaving is a way to record and preserve stories. And third, certain types of weavings are created to promote healing.

During the conference, Lynda worked at weaving a tapestry that tells the story of Catholic Health Initiatives. It was something I never would have imagined: that the story of this Catholic health ministry could be told through a traditional Navajo craft.

At the conference, we learned more about why the tapestry is a representation of Catholic Health Initiatives. For example, the individual fibers that go into the weaving must be strong, well-formed, combed and spun into smooth threads. This relates to the need for each of our facilities to be strong, to act together as one and to be true to the mission of Catholic Health Initiatives to build healthy communities.

We talked about how separate threads can be woven together into beautiful patterns; and how, when a pattern is no longer useful, the threads may have to be unraveled in order to create something new.

The tapestry also illustrates the faith the sisters had in us to carry this ministry forward, and the critical importance of each of us drawing on our faith life and bringing it with us into our daily work.

And, we talked about how, every day, all of us contribute to the greater tapestry that is Catholic Health Initiatives. Every decision, behavior and action taken either adds to or takes something away from the tapestry.

Now, as I go about my work, I think about what I may be adding to or taking away from the tapestry. I try to remember that every decision I make is part of something much larger. You could say that the tapestry of Catholic Health Initiatives began with the healing mission of the sisters, or even that of Christ. That is so much larger and more important than my ego, my reputation or my image of myself. That makes the most ordinary of daily tasks something to be done with thoughtfulness and due consideration. That is what will keep the tapestry beautiful and strong.

### ANONYMOUS

*Catholic Health Initiatives*

### *Questions for Reflection*

*How have you added your threads to the legacy of this ministry?*

*How has your facility contributed to One CHI?*

“The tapestry also illustrates the faith the sisters had in us to carry this ministry forward.”

