



The Most Reverend Ronald W. Gainer is Bishop of the Diocese of Lexington, Kentucky

Catholic Conference of Kentucky
Health Care Summit – *Shared Advocacy for the Common Good*
Reflections of Hope and Healing
November 5, 2008

In one passage in the Gospel of St. Luke, we hear that Jesus went into the synagogue to teach. A woman was present who had been crippled and unable to stand erect for eighteen years. Jesus called her to himself and said, **“Woman, you are set free of your infirmity.”** Laying hands upon her, she stood up straight and glorified God. We are told this healing miracle drew an indignant response from the synagogue leader because the cure had occurred on the Sabbath. (Luke 13:10-17)

The Gospel accounts of Jesus’ healing are almost always associated faith; either the faith of the individual healed or the faith of those around the sick person. Remember the healing of another woman, (Luke 8:40-48) the one who reached out to Jesus from within the crowd ... He said **“Daughter your faith has saved you; go in peace.”**

Our Catholic Health Care ministry reaches beyond caring for physical infirmities alone. As Marianne Potina noted earlier, Jesus’ healing always touched persons at their deepest level - physical, mental, and spiritual. Together, we the Catholic Conference of Kentucky and you, the Catholic Health Care professionals, commit ourselves to the total well being of persons. Into our treatment plans we integrate pastoral care of our patients, offering to them hope - based on faith that embraces the physical, psychological, social, and spiritual needs for healing care.

It is a universal human characteristic to want to avoid suffering, seeing it as weakness and a

warning of our mortality. Secular society measures the quality of life by its physical vibrancy, attractiveness and productivity. In Catholic Health Care we champion an essential truth. The dignity of all human life from conception to natural death, apart from whether that life is physically vigorous, attractive or productive. We believe that suffering and bearing our weaknesses can unite us more closely to the *suffering servant* who bore and endured our infirmities (Isaiah 55:4).

We offer hope through constancy and consistency within a framework drawn of human reason and medical science and illuminated by Sacred Scripture and the teaching of the Church. In our caring service and personal touch, we express the healing, unconditional love of God. In the Psalms, we find eloquent expressions lamenting pain, panic, and desperation. Yet, in each Psalms we find confidence in the power of God and the promise of hope and new life, even in the midst of the most unwanted and undeserved conditions in life. This healing hope is rooted in the generous, merciful love of God.

Witnessing to hope is all the more critical in today’s health care marketplace and environment. As we heard so clearly today, significant challenges abound: increasing populations of uninsured and under-insured needing access to health care; the good news and the alarmingly bad news of Kentucky’s ranking on our nation’s scales for health and wellness; continued challenges presented by dysfunctional and inadequate reimbursement systems

The Catholic Conference of Kentucky (CCK) is an agency of the Catholic Bishops of Kentucky, established in 1968. It speaks for the Church in matters of public policy, serves as liaison to government and the legislature, and coordinates communications and activities between the church and secular agencies. There are 406,000 Catholics in the Commonwealth. The Bishops of the four dioceses of KY constitute CCK’s Board of Directors.

not acknowledging quality and efficiency in care delivery; and the increasing pressures from the public policy agenda promoting the *intrinsic evils* of abortion, euthanasia, embryonic stem cell research, and cloning. In the secular ambience of healthcare, we are and will grow increasingly countercultural. In this environment we, Church leaders and leaders of Catholic Health Care must give testimony to our Christian hope by living in fidelity to the Gospel, to the charitable origins of our sponsors and to the critical mission that God has placed in our care. We must continue to be advocates for life - to be convincing proponents of the dignity and sacredness of all human life. It is our moral responsibility to seek tirelessly to defend the weak and vulnerable, to sustain the needs of the whole person with clinical and pastoral care and be attentive to the sacramental ministry we bring as partners and stewards of Jesus healing ministry.

The faithful imitation of Jesus is the essence of this vocation. We embody Christ to our patients or residents each minute of every encounter, on each shift. As leaders and managers, we must share this vision with all our collaborators - professional staff, clinicians, technicians, and the entire team of our institutions. We are called to be Christ in every situation offering the confidence of God's love which brings forth healing and hope.

It is our responsibility and obligation to be faithful to our mission and vocation to hope and healing. This undoubtedly requires courage and perseverance in the face of significant obstacles. The model Jesus gives us in the Gospel relating the healing of the crippled woman suggests a readiness and willingness to confront and confound government and regulatory authorities of our day by our defense of the dignity of human life and our profound respect for its inviolability. We must never allow the pressures of social consensus or popular polling to allow us to cooperate with evil - we have a great legacy and witness from our founders and sponsors to defend life at all stages.

From the Gospel account, the synagogue

leader was humbled when confronted with the fuller truth present in the healing of the crippled woman as she stood erect and glorified God. We can serve as the conscience of the community and the health care profession - let us not forget this healing and hopeful responsibility to stand erect and give glory to God.

As we leave today's Health Care Summit and return to our responsibilities, we should remember that ours is not the mere business of health care. It is not just an altruistic instinct that we follow. We are Health Care with a conscience. Yours is a vocation within your professions. You imitate the One who took on our flesh so that we may have Life in abundance and live in hope of the Life to come. Amidst all that you do, you carry this hope and healing founded on God's love and mercy to the patient, family members, and the staff to whom and with whom you minister. Advocacy for the common good is critical - it is from this moral ground that we argue for a better vision for our health care entities, a more equitable state distribution of health resources, and national health care policies, regulations, and laws that promote and ensure just allocations. It is in this way that we can advocate for the common good and further the healing mission of Jesus, the Healer and Hope of humanity.

Let us pray: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.