

Closing Remarks
By
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“The Future Landscape of Health Care in Kentucky”

“Today the Church is witnessing a crisis underway within society. While humanity is at the threshold of a new age, immensely serious and broad tasks await the Church, as in the most tragic periods of her history. It is a question in fact of bringing the perennial life-giving energies of the Gospel to the modern world, a world that boasts of its technical and scientific conquests but also bears the effects of a temporal order that some have wanted to reorganize by excluding God. This is why modern society is characterized by great material progress but without a corresponding advance in the moral sphere. ...

“These painful considerations remind us of the duty to be vigilant and keep our sense of responsibility awake. While distrustful souls see nothing but darkness falling upon the face of the earth, we prefer to restate our confidence in our Savior, who has not left the world he redeemed. Indeed, making our own Jesus’ recommendation that we learn to discern “the signs of the times” (Mt 16:4), it seems to us that we can make out, in the midst of so much darkness, more than a few indications that enable us to have hope for the fate of the Church and of humanity. “

These words could have been written this morning, they were, in fact, published on Christmas Day, 1961, almost 51 years ago. They are the opening words of *Humanae Salutis*, “Of the Salvation of Humanity,” the Apostolic Constitution by which Blessed John XXIII convoked the Second Vatican Council. As I’m sure you know, last Thursday Pope Benedict opened *The Year of Faith*, commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the opening of Vatican II and the twentieth anniversary of the promulgation of *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*. John XXIII’s words capture the spirit he wished to dominate the council’s deliberations and outcome: a sober, realistic analysis of the signs of the times but an analysis infused not by darkness and pessimism but by the singular light and hope of the Gospel of our Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

As we conclude our time together today, the words of John XXIII accurately anticipate the current environment of health care in both the United States and Kentucky. The factors affecting *The Future Landscape of Health Care* are in a state of dynamic transition. As leaders of health care entities, you must navigate this indistinct course guided by our foundational principles and mission. The challenges you have before you are immense and they carry grave consequences. They require a sober and realistic analysis. You need to “discern the signs of the times.” At the same time, we face these critical challenges standing firmly on the legacy of Catholic Health

Care, a legacy of light and hope grounded in the person and truth of Christ, the God-given dignity of every human person and the moral and social teachings of our Catholic Church, particularly as expressed in the framework of the Ethical and Religious Directives.

There is no need for me to rehearse the statistics, trends, pressures and challenging regulations in health care today. These are well known to you. We heard them clearly articulated in today's presentations and you are working daily to find the right pathway through them to achieve your mission. I imagine that the familiar slogan resonates with you and your staffs: "*We have done so much with so little for so long, we can now do almost anything with nothing.*"

Perhaps this is exactly what is being asked of you. Innovation has always been the hallmark of Catholic Health Care. The Religious Foundresses of your institutions faced what from a merely human perspective appeared to be insurmountable obstacles: slim financial resources, prejudices, cultural biases, the poor state of public health and more. Yet they dared to act, to begin, to establish when others looked away. Consistent with that legacy you will innovate to change the means of health care delivery -- new techniques, new venues, and new organizational alignments. All this you will do to innovate and overcome the obstacles that seem so large before you. You do these things because you are professionals, remembering you came to this profession – this vocation - because you care deeply for others and for their wellbeing.

All that you do under the banner of Catholic Health Care is incarnational. All the temporalities, budgets, contracts, service lines, patient encounters, and business transactions – all that you do and the way in which you do it preaches to the world, spreads the Gospel, and fulfills the mission given to us by Christ. During this Year of Faith and the New Evangelization we accept the responsibility as Catholic leaders and Catholic institutions to renew, repropose, and safeguard more vigorously and more effectively the legacy and uniquely distinctive character of Catholic Health Care.

In March 1975, Venerable Fulton J. Sheen said, "*I am worried about America! I am not so much worried about its politics or its economics, important though they be: I am worried about its soul. After all, politics and economics are determined by the sense of values which underlies them.*" We must embrace our mission fully and unambiguously today! We have always been and always will be called to be the conscience of health care in our society. If this is to remain our differentiating characteristic, we must have and manifest a well-formed conscience. Now is the moment in history that we are called to be the difference in the health care marketplace and in the public square to heal the soul of our nation.

The Church exists to evangelize and Catholic Health Care is fundamentally an expression of the Church's work of evangelization.

In his homily last Thursday at the Mass opening the Year of Faith, Pope Benedict noted: "Jesus Christ, consecrated by the Father in the Holy Spirit, is the true and perennial subject of

evangelization. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor” (*Lk* 4:18). This mission of Christ, this movement of his continues in space and time, over centuries and continents. It is a movement which starts with the Father and, in the power of the Spirit, goes forth to bring the good news to the poor, in both a material and a spiritual sense. The Church is the first and necessary instrument of this work of Christ because it is united to him as a body to its head. “As the Father has sent me, even so I send you” (*Jn* 20:21), says the Risen One to his disciples, and breathing upon them, adds, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (v.22). Through Christ, God is the principal subject of evangelization in the world; but Christ himself wished to pass on his own mission to the Church; he did so, and continues to do so, until the end of time pouring out his Spirit upon the disciples ...”

On a recent international flight, I had the opportunity to enjoy the movie “The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel.” If you don’t know the story line, a small group of British retirees experience a conversion, realizing that the life they had anticipated living in their golden years was not the life they needed to live. A more productive and fruitful future awaited them. At first they are disillusioned and even angry because the advertisements that the once opulent hotel had been restored to its former grandeur were greatly exaggerated, in fact, false. Sonny, the young man who had inherited the rundown hotel and had enticed the retirees to take up residence in it, had a brilliant response to the retirees as they registered their complaints about their living situations. He would tell them, “Everything will be all right in the end. If everything is not all right, then it is not the end.”

As we reflect on “The Future Landscape of Health Care in Kentucky” from our distinctive perspective of Catholic Health Care, there are many unknowns, questions and uncertainties, perhaps even some complaints and disillusionment. The words the Beloved Disciple, Saint John, wrote to us in his First Letter ring true as we face the future: “Beloved, we are God’s children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed (I John 3:2 NAB). Everything may not be all right but we know full well that it is not yet the end.

As we survey and walk over that uncertain landscape, we journey with grace and confidence as God’s children, with trust that this work of Church is guided by the Holy Spirit and that our way is illumined by the light of the Gospel of Christ, Savior and Healer of Humankind.