CATHOLIC HEALTH CARE LEADERSHIP ALLIANCE

CHRIST CENTERED CARE

January 2025 Newsletter

President's Column

"Hope does not disappoint." (Romans 5:5)

Dear Friends in Christ,

Pope Francis has chosen the theological virtue of Hope as the theme for our celebration of the Jubilee Year 2025. In his papal bull announcing the jubilee, the Holy Father expressed his desire that "the Jubilee be a moment of genuine, personal encounter with the Lord Jesus, the 'door' of our salvation, whom the Church is charged to proclaim always, everywhere, and to all as 'our hope.'"

This theme could not be timelier for those involved in the ministry of Catholic healthcare as we confront the epidemic of loneliness and hopelessness in America. This epidemic is manifested by a severe crisis in mental health and the tragic rise in death rates from suicide and substance abuse. But why are so many suffering from this loss of hope?

In his encyclical letter Spe Salvi Pope Benedict XVI attributes this development to a centuries-old shift in focus from hope in God to hope in man alone, from dependence on God to dependence on human reason alone, and from faith in God to faith in human progress alone. In contrast to the theological virtue of hope, "by which we desire the kingdom of God and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ's promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit," (CCC 1817) this modern, secular concept of hope has inevitably led

to despair as man discovers human happiness and flourishing are not possible apart from God.

In healthcare, this shift in focus has led to an overreliance on man's ability to treat the sick with merely scientific and technological means without equal consideration given to caring for the inherent emotional and spiritual dimensions of human illness. The result can be a loss of hope leading to despair when medical science cannot provide a physical cure or complete relief of a patient's suffering.

Only hope in something, or actually in Someone, that transcends the physical reality of human suffering will bring comfort and healing to the mind and spirit of a patient with a disabling or incurable condition. And this hope in Someone is the hope of which Pope Francis and Benedict speak. It is a supernatural hope in the person of Jesus Christ and His promises, relying not on human strength alone, but on the healing Love of the Holy Spirit.

In the vocation of medicine, physicians and allied health care professionals are called to bring the love and mercy of Jesus into every patient encounter. In the power of the Holy Spirit, we are able to minister to the whole person, providing an opportunity for a personal encounter with Christ and engendering hope that in all circumstances, all will be well for those who love God. (Romans 8:28)

Throughout this Jubilee Year of Hope, we will all have the privileged opportunity of offering relief to those who are hopeless by "always being ready to offer a reason for our hope" (1 Peter 3:15), "an anchor of the soul sure and firm." (Hebrews 6:19) We can also encourage all those we care for to open the doors of their hearts to Jesus Christ "our hope: (1 Tim 1:1) with this short prayer adapted from the hymn "Lord of all Hopefulness," and offered to the One Who does not disappoint.

Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy,
Whose trust, ever child-like, no cares can destroy,
Be there at our waking, and give us, we pray,
Your bliss in our hearts, Lord, throughout this day.

God Bless,
Steven White, M.D.
President, CHCLA