CATHOLIC HEALTH CARE LEADERSHIP ALLIANCE

CHRIST CENTERED CARE

September 2024 Newsletter

President's Column

"The world is in great need of the Christian virtue of Hope."
Pope Francis, May 8, 2024

Dear Friends in Christ,

The theological virtue of hope is the central theme of Pope Francis' decree announcing the Jubilee year of 2025 in the Bull of Indiction titled, "Hope Does Not Disappoint."

Reflecting on the words of St. Paul, the Pope offers words of encouragement reminding us that "hope does not disappoint because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." (Romans 5:5) He asks 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.'"

In the Catechism #1817, we are taught "hope is the theological virtue by which we desire Heaven 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." And today it is more important than ever as we strive to live as disciples of Christ in a culture openly hostile to Christianity, that we trust in Him and the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Pope Francis doesn't diminish the serious challenges we are confronting in the world today calling attention to the numerous conflicts and wars and the

need for lasting peace, the declining birthrates across the world leading to an impending demographic collapse, the many sick, lonely, abandoned and poor including displaced migrants and refugees, as well as widespread despair resulting in an epidemic of drug addiction and suicide.

And yet despite these dire circumstances he remarks that, "In addition to finding hope in God's grace…we need to recognize the immense goodness present in the world, lest we be tempted to think ourselves overwhelmed by evil and violence." Because as St Paul reassures us, even in very grave circumstances our hope is not in vain, for "where evil abounds, grace abounds even more." (Rom. 5:20)

We see this grace manifested in so many ways today in countless new and flourishing apostolic initiatives focused on catechesis, evangelization, formation in virtue and ministries accompanying the most vulnerable in society. It is also not coincidental, but providential, that abundant graces are flowing forth from the Eucharistic Revival now in its third year in the United States. And this year we are being called to go forth on mission, "to renew the Church by enkindling a living relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist," the source of our hope.

I agree with many who believe we are at a pivotal crossroads in America today. The abandonment of traditional Christian values over decades has led to a dramatic transformation in our culture with the loss of a biblical understanding of human anthropology, marriage and family, and society ordered in conformity with God's law.

Cardinal Karol Wojtyla in a prophetic statement delivered during a visit to the United States in 1976 for the celebration of the nation's bicentennial and the 41st International Eucharistic Congress said this:

> "We are now standing in the face of the greatest historical confrontation humanity has gone through. I do not think that wide circles of the American society or wide circles of the Christian community realize this fully. We are now facing the final confrontation between the Church and the anti-Church, of the Gospel versus the anti-Gospel. This confrontation lies within the plans of divine Providence; it is a trial which the whole Church, and the Polish Church in particular, must take up. It is a trial of not only our nation and the Church, but, in a sense, a test of 2,000 years of culture and Christian civilization with all of its consequences for human dignity, individual rights, human rights and the rights of nations."

A decade later during a subsequent visit to the United States, Karol Wojtyla, now Pope John Paul II, in an address to Catholic health care leaders acknowledged the important role of Catholic health care in this historic cultural confrontation: "The Catholic health care apostolate is one of the most significant the Church offers…which penetrates and transforms the very fabric of American society…by constant witness to moral truth it contributes to the formation of society's moral vision."

And while many social, political, economic and religious factors will influence the outcome of this cultural battle for the soul of America, it is essential that Christ centered, life affirming health care from conception to natural death be reestablished in the vocation of medicine to counter the culture of death prevailing in the profession today.

It is the mission of the CHCLA to promote the flourishing of Catholic health care by the grace of God through the effective collaboration of all those involved in the delivery of care performed in harmony with the mind and heart of Christ. Our confidence lies in the virtue of hope as described by Pope Benedict XVI in his encyclical Spe Salvi. We are hopeful, "In the sense that we have been given hope, trustworthy hope, by virtue of which we can face our present: the present, even if arduous, can be lived and accepted if it leads towards a goal, if we can be sure of this goal, and if it is great enough to justify the effort of the journey."

The goal of restoring the ministry of Catholic health care in harmony with the mind and heart of Christ is one we are certain is within God's Providence, and while certainly "arduous," it is definitely "great enough to justify the effort."

We are called to bring the love and mercy of Christ to all those suffering physically, emotionally and spiritually with confidence, once again in the words of Pope St John Paul II, "There is no evil to be faced that Christ does not face with us. There is no enemy that Christ has not already conquered. There is no cross to bear that Christ has not already borne for us and does not now bear with us," so "I plead with you, never give up on hope, never doubt, never tire and never become discouraged. Be not afraid." (Pope John Paul II: In My Own Words, 2022)

I will close with inspiring words of encouragement from Bishop James Conley, Chair of the CHCLA Episcopal Advisory Board, in his beautiful pastoral letter titled "A Future With Hope":

> "The hope God gives us and the joy that accompanies this hope, is a precious treasure we must protect. When hope wanes, let us

> remember the countless ways God has blessed us, the particular instances in our lives where He has 'come through,' and the dark times when He felt absent but, in hindsight, we could discern His presence."

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