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January 28, 2007

A Pastoral Letter to the Roman Catholics of Saskatchewan on Catholic Health Care

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

Today more than ever Christians must continue to embrace health care ministry as a vital and integral part of our mission and life. In Saskatchewan, Catholics work and serve in all aspects of the health care system; their commitment to Catholic values and principles makes a real and meaningful difference in the lives of the sick, suffering and dying. Our Catholic faith shapes our perception of the people for whom we care, for we believe that our care for them is care given to Christ Himself. This faith forms the foundation for the manner in which Catholic health care services are managed and delivered.

Foundational to the faith tradition in Catholic hospitals and long-term care institutions has been the groundwork of the Sisters of many congregations who founded these institutions responding to critical needs in the province and country. This has also become the cornerstone of the future. The legacy of these women, who provided unique and excellent health care, gives us the courage to continue to uphold the faith tradition centred around love, compassion and caring.

We believe Catholic health ministry is identified through our baptismal call to bear witness to the healing presence of Christ in the world, through the mission of the Catholic health care organizations, and through the freedom to build a community of care and compassion. In Catholic facilities, we strive to create strong organizations that are characterized by:

- quality medical care;
- excellent spiritual/religious care;
- health care providers who through their example demonstrate deep respect for the dignity of each person;
- values rooted in the Gospel that enable us to remain united and committed to our legacy of caring;
- our firm belief in the value of prayer and the sacraments;
- the Christian symbols and the presence of the chapel which create an environment of inspiration, life, energy and hope for patients and their families;
- an appreciation for the ethical principles of Catholic health care; and,
- a readiness to reach out to the vulnerable who are frequently left behind and to those least able to care for themselves.

Today, however, Canadian Catholics stand at a critical turning point in health care. During the past few decades, significant changes have occurred in society, in the Church, in medical technology and in the management and delivery of health care. The future of Catholic health care will be determined in large measure by how we respond to these

changes and challenges. Catholics must be committed to ensuring that the Church's distinct health care voice is vibrant and bold in these changing times.

Catholic health care and its institutions have constantly adapted to the changing ways of providing, cooperatively and collaboratively, for the health care needs of Canadians.

We are asking that Catholic health care organizations be assured that their commitment, contribution and involvement in health care is recognized and valued. Our vision and hope is that we will enjoy the freedom to continue to provide health care services in accordance with the values and teachings of the Catholic Church.

We acknowledge the open opposition expressed by some to the presence of Catholic health care in hospitals and other institutions. The Bishops, as teachers and leaders of the Catholic community, ask the Catholic laity to fulfil their baptismal call by bearing public witness to our faith. Christ's call to unity of faith urges us to remain united and committed to our legacy of Catholic health care in all its forms, which flows from the Gospel teachings. We must continue to advocate for fairness, equity and a voice for Catholic health care.

It is important for us to be involved in discussions concerning health care governance and policy. Catholic health care is a sharing in the healing ministry of Jesus; therefore, the whole Catholic community needs to be brought into this ministry. Caring for each other, and particularly for the sick, suffering and dying, is the vocation of every baptized Christian.

The Gospel parable of the Good Samaritan captures the health and healing ministry incumbent on every Christian when confronted with a fellow human being who is in need. "A Good Samaritan," said Pope John Paul II, "is *anyone* who stops to attend to the needs of those who are suffering."

As Catholics, we are all called by this Gospel message to attend to those in need, to be helpers and healers in the service of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Sincerely in Christ,



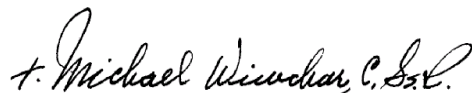
Most Rev. Daniel J. Bohan
Archbishop of Regina



Most Rev. Blaise Morand
Bishop of Prince Albert



Most Rev. Albert LeGatt
Bishop of Saskatoon



Most Rev. Michael Wiwchar, CSSR
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