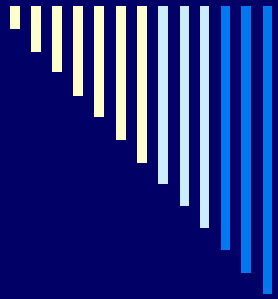


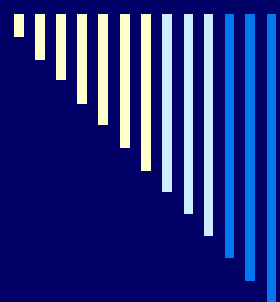
Catholic Health Care, Palliative Care, and
Revitalizing a Distinct Tradition of Caring
and Spirituality

Myles N. Sheehan, S.J., M.D.



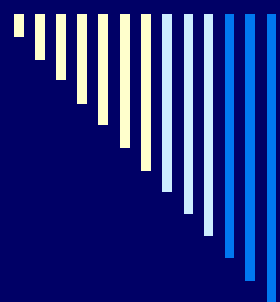
Goal

- Consider a distinctly Catholic pathway to transformation in a time of constant change
- Rooted in our history and values
- Open and welcoming to others yet nourished and energized by our faith tradition



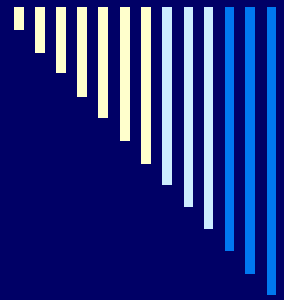
Objectives

- ❑ Describe the historical background of Church involvement in health care
- ❑ Understand this as a ministry to continue the mission of Jesus
- ❑ Consider ways in which the work of palliative care can revitalize Catholic healthcare as a healing ministry
- ❑ Explore resources for spiritual growth in palliative care while considering suffering, compassion, and excellence in End of Life care



Three Scenes

- Luke 4: 16-21 “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me...”
- Mark 1: 29-35 “...and there he prayed”
- Luke 7:11-16 “...he had compassion for her”



Take a minute...

- Guided imagery



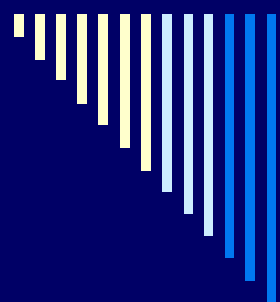
A brief historical tour

- ❑ Continuing Jesus' mission in New Testament times
 - ❑ Communities and early monasteries as caring for the sick
 - ❑ “Dark Ages” and rise of larger monasteries, religious orders, care for plague victims
 - ❑ Guilds, confraternities, religious orders
 - ❑ Rise of the hospital
 - ❑ Mission in the Americas
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A crazy idea...

- ❑ Palliative care as the catalyst for a renaissance of healthcare and the Faith
 - ❑ After Virtue by Alasdair MacIntyre: idea that communities of virtue, practices, preserve and transmit human excellence
 - ❑ Considers the monasteries in a time of cultural collapse
 - ❑ Could we be part of the new monasteries? Not monks and nuns, but transmitting Christ through care, compassion, suffering, and love?
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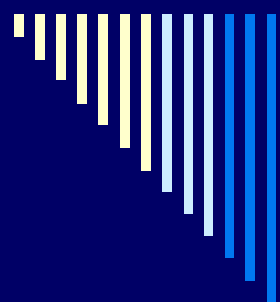
Ministry and Mission

- Ministry is work done to further the Mission of Jesus
- Jesus as priest---solidarity with humanity before God---as prophet---in his words and actions announcing the reality of God's love---as king---revealing God's way of ruling as service and willingness to love even in suffering



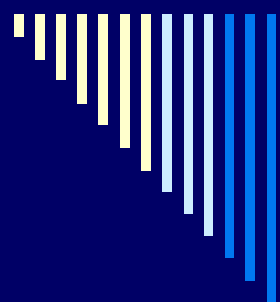
Palliative Care as a Ministry

- ❑ Provides care that serves the body and the spirit, acknowledges the “total pain” that can afflict those with life limiting illness
 - ❑ Acts to try and heal when curing is not possible, reconciling reality and hope in a way that Jesus did
 - ❑ Proclaims a new way to be with people that acknowledges human limits, acknowledges suffering, and is willing to suffer with others
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Personal Mission

- Key questions: Who am I? What am I doing? Who am I becoming?
- Reference points in the spiritual
- Personal prayer and mission
- We hold a treasure...



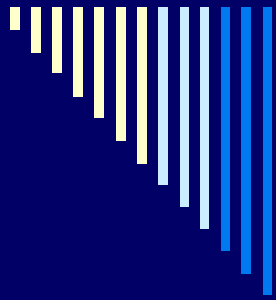
Where do we begin?

- We begin with our faith
- We are called to eternal life and fellowship with God as promised by Jesus Christ
- Human life is more than our time on this earth
- Our dying is how we are born to eternal life



What's the problem with that?

- ❑ People afraid that they will be killed and people afraid they will not be allowed to die
- ❑ Polarized attitudes of people who are lacking in depth knowledge of the tradition
- ❑ An emphasis on very unusual cases that keeps us from concentrating on the common
- ❑ Perhaps a greater willingness to argue rather than care, pray, formation of conscience and taking part in a humbling journey



A problematic attitude: Why worry?

- ❑ They're going to die anyway, what's it matter?
- ❑ Sloppiness with pain medications
- ❑ Inappropriate use of opioids and sedatives: deliberately shortening life rather than an unavoidable side effect
- ❑ Inability to journey along in the face of existential suffering



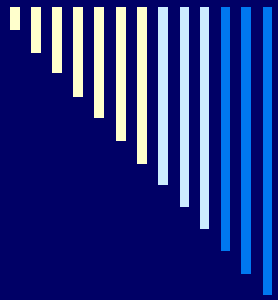
Threats to the ill and dying...

- Threats...hang over the incurably ill and the dying. In a social and cultural context which makes it more difficult to face and accept suffering, the temptation becomes all the greater to resolve the problem of suffering by eliminating it at the root, by hastening death so that it occurs at the moment considered most suitable...All this is aggravated by a cultural climate which fails to perceive any meaning or value in suffering, but rather considers suffering the epitome of evil, to be eliminated at all costs. This is especially the case in the absence of a religious outlook which could help to provide a positive understanding of the mystery of suffering. (Evangelium Vitae 15)
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Another problematic attitude

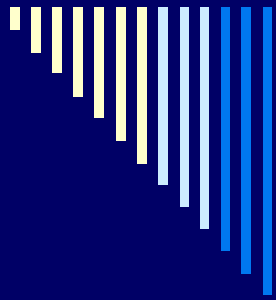
- ❑ A suspicion and hostility to palliative and hospice care as fostering euthanasia
 - ❑ A vitalistic attitude that is ignorant of magisterial teaching but condemns others as “not Catholic”
 - ❑ Denigrating efforts to relieve pain and physical symptoms as lacking in an appropriate spirituality
-



The goal of human existence

- Man is called to a fullness of life which far exceeds the dimensions of his earthly existence, because it consists in sharing the very life of God. The loftiness of this supernatural vocation reveals the greatness and the inestimable value of human life even in its temporal phase...

(Evangelium Vitae #2)



The Relative Character of Earthly Life

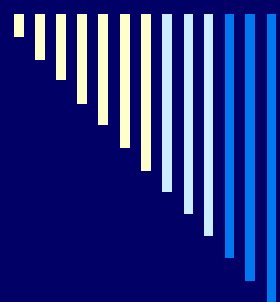
- ...”it is precisely this supernatural calling which highlights the relative character of each individual’s earthly life. After all, life on earth is not an “ultimate” but a penultimate” reality; even so it remains a sacred reality entrusted to us, to be preserved with a sense of responsibility and brought to perfection in love and in the gift of ourselves to God and to our brothers and sisters.”

(Evangelium Vitae #2)



John Paul II's endorsement of Palliative Care

- Particularly in the stages of illness when proportionate and effective treatment is no longer possible, while it is necessary to avoid every kind of persistent or aggressive treatment, methods of "palliative care" are required. As the Encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* affirms, they must "seek to make suffering more bearable in the final stages of illness and to ensure that the patient is supported and accompanied in his or her ordeal" (n. 65).
 - In fact, palliative care aims, especially in the case of patients with terminal diseases, at alleviating a vast gamut of symptoms of physical, psychological and mental suffering; hence, it requires the intervention of a team of specialists with medical, psychological and religious qualifications who will work together to support the patient in critical stages. (John Paul II, November 2004, Speech to the Pontifical Council for Health)
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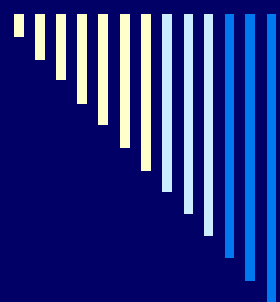


Benedict XVI on Palliative Care

World Day of the Sick Message

February 15, 2007

- Sickness inevitably brings with it a moment of crisis and sober confrontation with one's own personal situation. Advances in the health sciences often provide the means necessary to meet this challenge, at least with regard to its physical aspects. Human life, however, has intrinsic limitations, and sooner or later it ends in death. This is an experience to which each human being is called, and one for which he or she must be prepared.



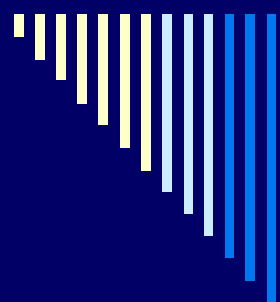
...Benedict XVI

- Despite the advances of science, a cure cannot be found for every illness, and thus, in hospitals, hospices and homes throughout the world we encounter the sufferings of our many brothers and sisters who are incurably and often terminally ill. In addition, many millions of people in our world still experience insanitary living conditions and lack access to much-needed medical resources, often of the most basic kind, with the result that the number of human beings considered “incurable” is greatly increased.



...Benedict XVI

- The Church wishes to support the incurably and terminally ill by calling for just social policies which can help to eliminate the causes of many diseases and by urging improved care for the dying and those for whom no medical remedy is available. There is a need to promote policies which create conditions where human beings can bear even incurable illnesses and death in a dignified manner.
-



...Benedict XVI

- Here it is necessary to stress once again the need for more palliative care centres which provide integral care, offering the sick the human assistance and spiritual accompaniment they need. This is a right belonging to every human being, one which we must all be committed to defend



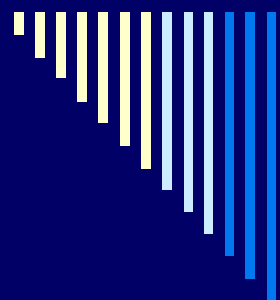
...Benedict XVI

- Here I would like to encourage the efforts of those who work daily to ensure that the incurably and terminally ill, together with their families, receive adequate and loving care. The Church, following the example of the Good Samaritan, has always shown particular concern for the infirm. Through her individual members and institutions, she continues to stand alongside the suffering and to attend the dying, striving to preserve their dignity at these significant moments of human existence.
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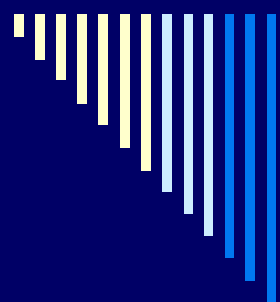
Palliative Care and the Church's Mission

- Jesus' example
 - Historical precedent
 - Healing and change rooted in relationship with God, community in prayer, spiritual growth, willingness to suffer with others, commitment to witness to Christ's presence
 - How do you do that?
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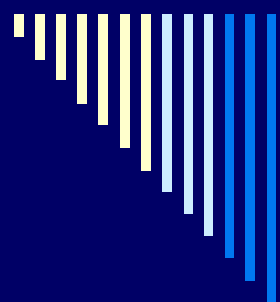
Suffering

- ❑ Not be ignored or denied or lugubriously glorified
- ❑ Mater Dolorosa
- ❑ Entering into the suffering



The witness of suffering

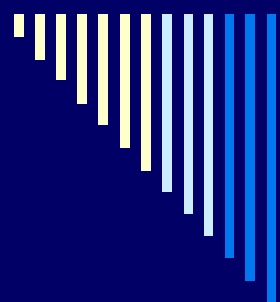
“Down through the centuries and generations it has been seen that in suffering there is concealed a particular power that draws a person interiorly close to Christ, a special grace...



The witness of suffering (cont.)

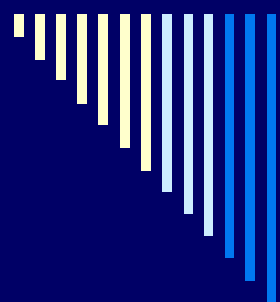
...When the body is gravely ill, totally incapacitated, and the person is almost incapable of living and acting, all the more do interior maturity and spiritual greatness become evident, constituting a touching lesson to those who are healthy and normal.”

John Paul II *Salvifici doloris*, 26



The Good Samaritan

- Luke 10: 27-39
- Palliative care as caring for those who might be passed by...or otherwise be assaulted
- The two coins for payment and Christ the Physician...the human and the divine in healing



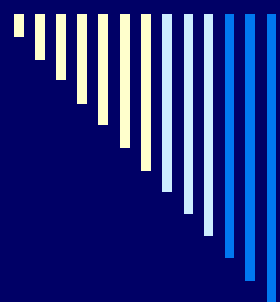
The Good Samaritan

- The parable of the Good Samaritan belongs to the Gospel of suffering. For it indicates what the relationship of each of us must be towards our suffering neighbor. We are not allowed to “pass by on the other side” indifferently; we must “stop” beside him. Everyone who stops beside the suffering of another person, whatever form it may take, is a Good Samaritan. (Salvifici doloris 28)



Being a Good Samaritan...

- The name “Good Samaritan” fits every individual who is sensitive to the sufferings of others, who is moved by the misfortune of another. If Christ, who knows the interior of man, emphasizes this compassion, this means that it is important for our whole attitude to others’ suffering. Therefore one must cultivate this sensitivity of heart, which bears witness to compassion towards a suffering person. Some times this compassion remains the only or principal expression of our love for and solidarity with the sufferer.
-



...Being a Good Samaritan

- ...a Good Samaritan is one who brings help in suffering, whatever its nature may be...We can say that he gives himself, his very “I”, opening this “I” to the other person. Here we touch upon one of the key-points of all Christian anthropology. Man cannot “fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself.” A Good Samaritan is the person capable of exactly such a gift of self.” (Salvifici doloris 28)



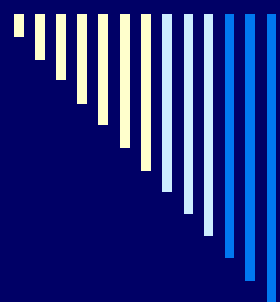
What made Catholic Healthcare Distinctive

- The Sisters took care of just about everyone
 - Their community witness to Christ made hospitals a sacred place
 - Their prayerfulness and hard work transformed attitudes and society
 - So...what's up with you?
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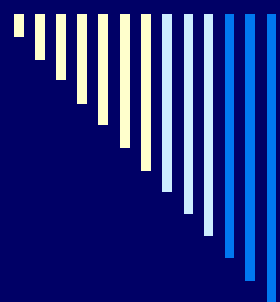
Recovering Our Tradition as Caregivers in Palliative Care

- Prayer and reflection as part of Palliative Care for the caregivers
 - Showing faith in acceptance of others and inclusiveness that does not deny one's grounding
 - Allowing one's light to shine so brightly others see
 - Palliative care really is the paradigm of person centered care
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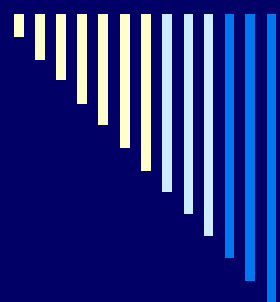
Vision

- Participation in the ministry of Christ
- Ministry as mission and the Church
- Illness and the end of Life
- Endorsement of palliative care by the Church
- Christ the physician and caregiver
- Role of prayer and the sacraments



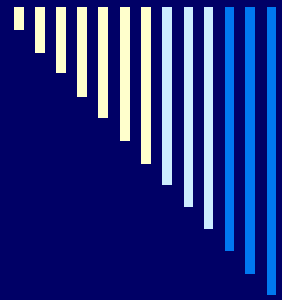
Creating New Communities

- ❑ Alasdair MacIntyre “After Virtue”
- ❑ Words mean different things: suffering, comfort, caring, a good death.
- ❑ Monasteries as preservers of what was best in a civilization
- ❑ Palliative care as an example of a practice of virtue, growth in excellence
- ❑ A vision to be shared with Catholic healthcare
- ❑ Catholic healthcare as the new monasteries?



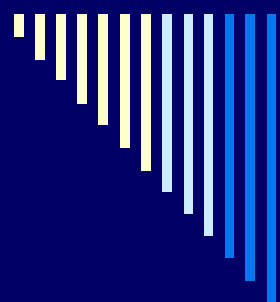
Inclusiveness

- The elderly
- Those with life limiting illness
- The family that is suffering
- Conflicts
- Psychological and spiritual distress
- Reaching out beyond imagined barriers:
immigrants, uninsured, mentally ill,
difficult people



Sources of strength

- Parallels with religious life
- Prayer
- Personal spirituality
- Group mission and identity



Some Medications from the Divine Physician

- Lectio Divina
 - Imaginative Prayer
 - Rosary
 - Ignatian Examen
 - Mass and Eucharist
 - Reconciliation
-



Summary

- ❑ Christ's ministry and the Church's healing ministry are exemplified in palliative care
 - ❑ Appropriating a faith vision rooted in that tradition can lead to personal growth and transformational change for the healthcare ministry
 - ❑ Accepting this vocation requires prayer and the ability to enter into the suffering that is part of life's journey
-