

SaskEthics

An Ethics Newsletter for Catholic Healthcare Organizations in Saskatchewan

Living our mission of hospitality

Dear *SaskEthics* Readers,



There's a saying in Catholic healthcare that is sometimes used to describe the relationship between our Mission and our Ethics: "Mission is

who we say we are. Ethics is what we do in light of who we say we are." As one of the few ethicists in the country that shares my office with my hospital's mission team, this relationship is never far from my mind, and over the past three years it became even more important as I explored the value of hospitality.

My fixation on hospitality began in 2022 when the Catholic Health Association of Saskatchewan asked me to facilitate a breakout session at their convention ([SaskEthics-7-2.pdf](#)). The session started me on a journey to answer the question: if we say that Catholic hospitals and care homes are places of welcome, what are we doing to live out this part of our mission?

After the convention, I was blessed with many opportunities to explore this question with teams across Saskatchewan, and I was always delighted to hear about

how they worked to create environments to help patients, families and visitors feel more welcome. For example, many of our teams spoke about the conversation they have with residents when they first arrive in our care homes, which usually includes a question such as, "what can we do to help you feel more at home?"

Our teams also spoke about how valuable it is to feel welcome in their own work environment. Some spoke about how important it is to feel appreciated, with many teams adopting a staff appreciation cart to provide a small thank-you gift to staff in the form of chocolate or a notebook or even socks! These gifts have had a ripple effect in our buildings, as the smiles they give to our team members are passed forward.

I have pulled a few insights from all of these conversations. The first is a recognition that hospitality is a two-way street. Fun fact: did you know that in Italian the same word, *ospite*, is used to designate a host and a guest? Both people have a shared responsibility in creating an environment in which a relationship can be nurtured. This is absolutely true in Catholic health care where the only way we can grow in our exercise of hospitality

is through reciprocal relationships with our patients, clients and residents.

The second lesson is that hospitality is hard work. I asked our teams to share some of the barriers to hospitality that they experience, and they had a lot to say. Some spoke about feeling pressured by a never-ending list of tasks that made it difficult to be hospitable. Others said that it was often challenging to ask a person what they needed because there was a fear that the team would not be able to accommodate the request. Still others shared that it is impossible to champion hospitality if team members and those they care for do not feel physically safe, which is unfortunately the context in which some of our teams provide care.

The third lesson learned is that the work of hospitality is never complete. As our communities grow and change, there will always be new opportunities to evaluate whether we are living up to our mission. If we say that hospitality matters to us, what questions are we asking to discover whether the people who enter our hospitals and homes feel welcome?

How is your team living out the mission of hospitality? What are the challenges to hospitality that you have struggled to overcome? What would help you to bring a spirit of hospitality to your work?

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**SHARED VISION, SACRED WORK:
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Save the Date
Dates: October 29-30, 2026
Prince Albert



Catholic Health Association of Saskatchewan