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Catholic Long-term Care Health Organizations Meet to Discuss Implications of Schiavo Case

Representatives of local Catholic health care facilities met again this year on November 17th at Holy Cross Village at Notre Dame for their annual collaboration and participation in the Catholic Health Care Association's ethics audio conference. The focus this year was, *After Schiavo: Sorting Through the Issues*.

As a basis for their discussion the local organizations used the conference lecture by Ron Hamel, PhD, Senior Director, Ethics, Catholic Health Care Association, St. Louis, and directives from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops--- *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services*. Involved in the process were representatives and leadership from: Catherine Kasper Life Center, Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ, Donaldson; St. Mary's Convent, Notre Dame; Holy Cross Village at Notre Dame, and Holy Cross House, Notre Dame. The latter three organizations of Continuing Care Services are organizations providing health care through the Congregation of Holy Cross, Sisters, Priests, and Brothers.

Teri Schiavo's very public situation generated enormous controversy and considerable confusion mostly to do with the removal of a feeding tube in someone who was

diagnosed to be in a persistent vegetative state. This case served as a beginning discussion element for the group.

Offering personal perspective as contribution to the dialogue, those attending listened and discussed in particular: assumptions guiding care of patients in PVS (persistent vegetative state); troublesome claims of those involved; and withdrawal of medically administered nutrition and hydration in patients who are in PVS.

Pertinent articles for discussion involving the Catholic perspective on death, and modern medicine, along with sample cases for discussion were read previous to attendance at the conference at Holy Cross Village and served as background material.

“It’s at times like this when discussion with professional colleagues from one’s peer organizations along with the guidance of Catholic theologians and ethicists proves most helpful,” said convener, Steve Kastner, administrator of Holy Cross Village at Notre Dame. “Proximity to one another, the priests, brothers, and sisters, from these organizations is always an added value gleaning significant and pertinent witness and guidance from their experiences. This is the second year we’ve come together like this around the Catholic Health Care’s presentation. The people of Catholic Health Care ministry share a common set of values, mission and purpose. Hopefully this will become an annual experience assisting all of us in this significant work for the communities we serve.”

The Catholic Health Care Association of the United State represents the largest not-for-profit provider of health care services in the nation.

CHA's role is to advance selected ministry commitments that can best be pursued together rather than as individual organizations.

- 1 in 6 people in the united States are cared for in a Catholic acute care facility each year.
- All 50 states and the District of Columbia are served by Catholic health care organizations.
- More than 2,000 sponsors, systems, facilities, and related organizations serve a full continuum of health care.

Holy Cross Village at Notre Dame; St. Mary's Convent; and Holy Cross House all provide the highest quality of care in the Catholic Tradition and serve the ministry of health care with dedicated zeal, compassionate care, and professional excellence for their members and patients.

Holy Cross Village at Notre Dame is a Continuing Care Retirement Community. Catherine Kasper Life Center, a long term care facility is in Donaldson, Indiana. Both are open to the public.