

Hospital Chaplaincy:

I have been a part-time chaplain at the Cape Breton Regional Hospital for the past nine years. While I am remunerated by the Diocese, I work under the umbrella of the Dept. of Spiritual Care and responsible to the Director. I work in collaboration with several other staff chaplains.

My duties are patient visiting, currently focusing on the acute units, i.e., emergency, coronary care and intensive care. I am on site for two and a half days a week and on call for two other days. I am available for administering the Sacrament of the Sick throughout the hospital. I also celebrate a weekend liturgy on Saturday at 4 pm in the hospital chapel.

I co-ordinate and schedule a roster of five lay ministers of the Eucharist who distribute communion to Catholic patients who desire it on Sunday mornings. In addition, I co-ordinate the after hours on-call ministry involving Sydney area priests on a rotating schedule. I also take a turn on that schedule.

Catholic patients make up approximately 60-65 per cent of the patient population at any given time. Irrespective of this, I am available to patients of all faith backgrounds. Furthermore the hospital chapel is an interfaith facility. It is open to anyone, patients and family members alike, who is seeking comfort and solace in difficult times.

Something which I have found enlightening during the course of my work in the chaplaincy, is that spirituality is not limited to those have specific religious convictions or who belong to formal religious groupings, but encompasses unbelievers as well. Spiritual care, therefore, addresses the needs for meaning and purpose of a wide spectrum of people.

The experience of working in palliative care has truly been enriching for me, both in terms of the patient contact and the interaction with staff members on the unit. Witnessing the faith, courage and peacefulness of patients in the face of immanent death, and the compassion and solicitude of healthcare professionals toward them, has had a huge impact on the way I view life.

An area of concern has been the increasing instances of people, Catholics included, who are seeking and having Medical Assistance in Dying (M.A.I.D.). Healthcare needs to be about fostering a culture of life rather than a culture of death.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul McGillvray