

## **Homily for Missioning of Fiona Dalton**

John Paul II Pastoral Centre

11 June 2018

Dear friends:

### ***Introduction***

It is indeed a pleasure to be here with you today for this celebration, where we will mission Fiona Dalton as CEO and President of Providence Health Care, an institution to which we are all zealously committed and fervently attached.

I am pleased to welcome you to this Chapel of the Annunciation, commemorating the first announcement of the Good News of salvation to the Mother of Jesus. It is, I believe, a fitting place for this event, for Providence has its roots in the Gospel of mercy which the founding Religious Congregations brought to realization in their care for the sick and suffering.

### ***Fiona Dalton***

And so to begin, let me say once again how pleased we all are, Fiona, that you accepted the position of CEO of PHC. With you here are representatives of our two societies, our two boards, your senior leadership team and select staff. You are embraced by colleagues and friends who promise you their support. It is truly an auspicious and blessed beginning.

We will soon mission you in the principal tasks as CEO and President. We are counting on you to lead us by ensuring that

Providence’s vision remains vibrant, inventive, creative, so that, “driven by compassion and social justice we (PHC) [remain] at the forefront of exceptional care and innovation.”

### ***Context of Our “Missioning”***

And how we will do that “missioning” or “sending forth” is worth saying a few words about. This celebration is taking place in the context of what Catholics call a service of the Liturgy of the Word, where Readings from the bible are proclaimed. That’s why we began with a reading from the book of Genesis, a Psalm response, and a reading from the Gospel of Luke.

For us, the particular Readings selected tell us something essential about how believers – and, in fact, all women and men of good will – are called to respond to the needs of their neighbours.

Undoubtedly, these biblical narratives were at the heart of our five founding Congregations of Religious Sisters, who heard the call to provide health care and accepted the invitation from my predecessors to leave their homes out East and come to Vancouver to take up this ministry in what was then “mission” territory. In doing so, they also established education for others in the area of health care, and put PHC on the cutting edge of research.

It is no accident that the Readings chosen today speak to the principal tasks, the very heart, of what Providence Health Care is; and,

even more importantly. what it is for Fiona to be our leader, CEO and President.

### ***Reflections on the Readings***

I'd now like to reflect with you on the readings we just heard, and make three points about our shared mission: one about hospitality; one about our response to suffering; and one about loving our neighbour.

#### ***From Genesis***

The First Reading, from the Book of Genesis, tells an important truth about hospitality, which we know is critical to health care. Even the word hospital is embedded in hospitality.

The story is a famous one, often depicted in icons, as we will see later on. Three visitors announce that the elderly couple, Sarah and Abraham, well beyond child bearing years, will have a child. Sarah even jokes about the impossibility. But it was no joke. The next year Isaac was born and so Abraham could have the descendants promised to him.

What I'd like to focus on here is how Abraham and Sarah welcome the three strangers into their midst, because I think this gesture is important to health care, and health care leadership.

At the time and place of this story, in the territory of Canaan which was right in the middle of the trade route between Africa and Asia, there were no "hotels" or hospitals. But it was the practice of the Near East, then as now, to offer hospitality to strangers.

Even though in the text only Abraham offers hospitality, we rightly read the text, as our founding Sisters did, that we are all called to do so. What I think is important to understand from this narrative is how hospitality brings life. In this case, a new born, Isaac. But we also know that “new” life is also about healing.

Providence Health Care has been welcoming and healing all people from every life experience, every culture, every perspective since 1894. And it has always done so with the greatest respect for the individual person.

Understanding the dignity of every person, especially the vulnerable and marginalized, those on society’s fringes and often neglected, is an ongoing commitment, and remains a principal task of all of us.

Fiona will lead us in continuing our heritage as people of hospitality to all in the community.

***From Psalm 23***

Psalm 23 is probably one of the most famous and popular psalms. And there is so much to say about it. But I want to say that it reminds us of the importance of a leader being a shepherd.

The Lord God, Shepherd *par excellence*, restores us and leads us to still waters. He tells us something important about what leaders are to do.

Those who work in health care must also do that, lead to restoration and healing for those who find themselves in their “darkest hour” and their own dark valleys. Providence doesn’t just provide “solutions” to illness and health care problems. It is committed to walk a healing journey with them. It is committed to accompaniment.

Today we use our therapeutic skills, knowledge, science and technology as our rods, staff, and oil. I want to say that you, Fiona, and all our leaders are called to be shepherds, to lead those who suffer to restful waters because you care, because you are with them.

***From the Parable of the Good Samaritan***

Finally, we heard the Parable of the Good Samaritan. Again, a very well-known story, and one that speaks profoundly to the values of so much faith-based health care. The Canadian Health Ethics Guide starts with this story because it wants to emphasize that the care provided in Catholic health care facilities is about a fundamental response, in love, to everyone who suffers. Love – love of God which is inextricably bound to love of neighbour motivates PHC today, just like it did the founding Sisters.

We all know that health care today is complex. You all know that better than I do! You are working to transform care, working on new infrastructure, the new St. Paul’s and elder care, and exploring new solutions through your research.

The Good Samaritan, like Abraham and Sarah, reminds us that at its core, health care is about respecting the sacred dignity of every person. Every person is my neighbour. Is yours.

It is a great blessing that PHC reaches out with openness and to meet everyone where they are. It builds bridges of trust so that authentic healing of body and soul can take place.

So, we are called, each of us, to be good Samaritans who bind up the wounds of others, especially those cast aside by others, and are willing to make sacrifices to accomplish that.

### ***Conclusion***

Dear Fiona: As CEO and President, in our faith-based Catholic health system, I have every confidence that you will carry forward the vision that founded Providence and continues to shape its mission today. We are all so pleased and thankful that we have found such a leader in you. On behalf of all of us here – and the countless others who are part of the Providence family – I wish you well and God’s blessing as our leader.

It is my pleasure now to move to the next part of our celebration, the actual missioning ceremony itself.

✦ J. Michael Miller, CSB  
Archbishop of Vancouver