What makes an institution Catholic?

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Debates have been going on for years in Catholic colleges and universities about Catholic identity. Sometimes the debates are framed in such a way that the line between "Catholic" and "not Catholic" quickly becomes blurred. Concern for Catholic identity can function as a code for the concerns of the sponsoring religious community to maintain effective administrative control over the institution.

The case of Catholic hospitals is somewhat different because, in an increasing number of instances, all members of the sponsoring religious community are already gone, or reduced to nominal representation on the hospital's board of directors.

Does a Catholic hospital necessarily become less Catholic when the sponsoring religious community is no longer present? If the answer is no, does the institution cease to be Catholic entirely? If the answer is yes, do hospitals become Catholic because their chief executive officer isn't a member of the sponsoring religious community? No, it's less Catholic because the hospital apparently doesn't abide by the Catholic Church's social teachings regarding the natural right of workers to unionize, even though its lay president claims that the hospital has acted "morally and ethically according to the teachings of the church."

Self-serving rhetoric of that sort makes one think of the tobacco industry captains who piously insisted a few months ago — before a Congressional committee — that their product is non-addictive. And they said so under oath.

During the discussion of a recent episcopal statement on work-related religious issues, U.S. Catholic bishops' meeting in November, William E. McManus, retired bishop of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Ind., put the issue in its proper context: "What we proclaim from the housesteps we should practice in-house.

In the end, Catholic institutional identity has less to do with sponsoring religious communities and quotas of Catholic faculty and staff than it does with the actual practice of Catholic values by and within the institution.

Catholic universities, colleges, hospitals, Somehow, the natural right of workers to unionize, even though its lay president claims that the hospital has acted "morally and ethically according to the teachings of the church."

The same thing happened to Peter. When the miracle of the catch of fish made him realize he was in the presence of divinity, he fell at Jesus's knees and said, "Leave me, Lord. I am a sinful man."

As an angel purified Isaiah for his work, so Jesus told the apostles, "Do not be afraid. From now on you will be catching men."

We all know of the shortage of vocations to the priesthood and the religious life in our country. Perhaps some are expecting that a religious vocation will come to them as it did to Isaiah and the apostles — by direct heavenly intervention. A beautiful painting of St. Augustine holding hands with his own priest's hand and enter the Holy of Holies himself. For this, God struck him with leprosy. This same intercessor had infected the people of Israel so Isaiah's vocation was to proclaim God's holiness to king and people —

this time in history was particularly timely. For Uzziah had been struck with leprosy precisely because he was arrogant and did not respect God's holiness. Uzziah had done one day to the House of God. He sat on a high and lofty throne, and said, "Because I don't want to go to heaven alone.

A good heart means having no bad habit or sin unconquered. A good heart means having no bad habit or sin unconquered. A good heart means having no bad habit or sin unconquered.

"Let us strive to make the present moment beautiful." — St. Francis de Sales