Benedictines and St. Alexius Hospital

FORMATION INNOVATION PODCAST: Courageous Paths of Hope & Healing Series

Benedictines the world around are known for their commitment to hospitality. In his rule, St. Benedict encourages his monks to "receive all as Christ" (Rule of Benedict ch. 53) and "above all else provide care for the sick." (Rule of Benedict ch. 36). When, in 1878, the Benedictine Sisters arrived in Bismarck to teach immigrant children, it didn't take long to recognize that what was needed most was a hospital in which to care for the sick. Bismarck marked the end of the railroad, a frontier town with a mix of immigrants, cowboys, military personnel and Native Americans.

Committed to serving the needs of others, more sisters came to open St. Alexius Hospital in the new Lamborn Hotel in 1885. These women, with no nursing or medical background cared for the sick as best they could with wholesome food, clean bedding, and an abundance of care.

The sisters were zealous in offering the best care possible. Increased awareness of germs and how they spread spurred Dr. Quain and Sr. Cresentia to introduce the new concept of sterilization of surgical instruments into their practice. This was accomplished by boiling the surgical instruments, a challenging task, as they carried water from the Missouri River ½ mile away.
Readiness to utilize new knowledge and techniques in the care of patients was evidenced by the purchase of the newly developed sterilizer. Just two years after the development of the x-ray machine in Germany, the Bismarck Tribune reported that at St. Alexius Hospital an x-ray was taken to diagnose a little girl's broken arm. Innovation was and continues to serve as a cornerstone of St Alexius Hospital.

Commitment to new technology, best practices, and education have been a mainstay throughout the history of St Alexius. Today, 134 years later, in the face of COVID virus, St. Alexius continues to branch out into the future, implementing what we know about diseases, viruses, and human nature, always faithful to care which does, indeed, treat each and every person who walks under our arch as we would treat Christ himself.

Submitted by:
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