

# Tony Houston: Faithful presence among patients, staff

written by Special to Arkansas Catholic |



## **Anthony “Tony” Houston, 44**

*President, CHI St. Vincent Hot Springs*

- Category: Large Business

“Be open to know that the next thing that taps you on the shoulder could be Christ — and are you ready?” Tony Houston

- Parish: St. John Church, Hot Springs
- Family: wife Rebecca and one daughter

- What book would you recommend for ways to grow in spirituality or leadership?  
“There’s a great book. It’s called ‘Heroic Leadership,’ by Chris Lowney (board chairman of Catholic Health Initiatives).”

Anthony “Tony” Houston does not simply work as the president of CHI St. Vincent in Hot Springs. It is a calling. Whether it’s greeting everyone from the doctor to the volunteer by name to attending Mass at the hospital’s chapel, he is present to not only his staff and patients, but to where God leads him each day.

One Bible story that resonates with him, he said, is the disciples on the road to Emmaus.

“It’s a journey — it can feel scary at times, you can feel lonely, you can feel disoriented, you can feel despair with the world around us, the newspapers, what’s happening in Church, what’s happening outside the Church. Health care is not an easy place to practice with all the rules and regulations and all the different things that come, you can allow it to be overwhelming,” Houston said. “But I get real comfort from the story of the road to Emmaus and say well why are you doing this? Why are you journeying, what’s your why, what’s your commitment? And to be open to know that the next thing that taps you on the shoulder could be Christ — and are you ready?”

Houston has served as president since December 2014. A native of Cincinnati and a cradle Catholic, he graduated with a master’s degree from Xavier University in Cincinnati. He is currently working on his doctorate in leadership through Creighton University. Houston often draws upon his Jesuit education during monthly meetings with hospital leaders, reminding employees of the Sisters of Mercy legacy, the teachings of Pope Francis and has given out the Ignatian Examen Prayer.

“To this day I practice the Examen ... I’m going to make mistakes, but there’s always a gift of tomorrow to do better and I feel energized by it,” he said.

While leading a hospital and outreach services with 1,700 employees and 300 to 500 patients and others passing through the hospital each day, it would be easy to let core values slip away.

“I’m a huge believer that, and we believe this to in our core values here, we are all created in the image and likeness of God,” he said.

Houston regularly “makes the rounds,” meeting with employees at all levels and also with patients. He’ll ask what is working well and listens to the positive and the possible improvements that can be made.

“It’s fun for me. That’s one of the neatest parts of my job,” Houston said. “... It gives me a lot of gratitude that I’m a part of this ministry. I’m not just a guy who looks at numbers every day; I get to work with the coworkers and touch people’s lives.”

— *Aprille Hanson*