

5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B  
St. Mary's  
Job 7:1-4, 6-7  
Response – Psalm 147:1-6  
1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23  
Mark 1:29-32  
February 8, 2009

#### Public Policy Weekend – Access to Health Care

Last week, Jesus healed a man with an unclean spirit, thus a spiritual healing. Today we hear the story of Jesus' first physical healing. Jesus is concerned with both body and spirit.

After preaching and working the miracle of the exorcism Jesus has moved to Simon and Andrew's house. Simon's mother-in-law was there, sick with a fever. And Jesus healed her.

And then many people came to him who were sick or possessed by demons. Jesus healed all of them, some physically and some spiritually.

Throughout the gospels Jesus continues to heal people. Jesus was sent to proclaim the gospel of God. God wants us to be healed of our broken heartedness. An important part of this is physical.

Later in the year, we will hear how Jesus sends out the Twelve Apostles with the power to heal and exorcism demons. The healing ministry of the Twelve is rooted in the healing ministry of Jesus.

In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus will give us the Corporal Works of Mercy; including feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked, and to *care for the ill*.

Healing was an important part of Jesus' ministry; a ministry he extended to the Twelve in a very powerful way. And it is a ministry we are *each* called to continue according to our own gifts.

Does this mean we all have the gift to exorcise demons? Does it mean we can all lay hands on people and have them be healed of their physical ailments? That would be nice, wouldn't it but it doesn't seem to be the case.

Then how are we called to share in the healing ministry. Well, for some it is as health care workers. The most obvious are doctors, nurses, and the aides. It extends to all those who work as support and administrative staff for medical facilities as long as you are concerned with care for the person rather than making a profit.

It also includes those who visit the sick just to spend time with them and to share faith with them. It's called pastoral care and it's not just for the ordained or religious.

What about the rest of us? How do we contribute to Jesus' healing ministry? First, in a direct sense we do so by caring for our loved ones, visiting them in the hospitals or nursing homes, and caring for them at home *when possible*.

But that still leaves a lot of us without a way to always share in healing ministry using the gifts we have. I know I don't feel like I have the gifts to care for a loved one at home.

What can we do?

We can advocate for those in need of health care.

How do we advocate? To advocate for those in need of health care means to stand up for what is a fundamental right of being human.

Our faith calls us to see humans not just as machine but as a “person” with rights. We are created in the image of God. That gives a dignity that can never be taken away.

Our country is founded on rights. *The Declaration of Independence*, the founding document of our country states

We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

The right to life is not just a matter of life and death. It is a matter of being able to live a full and healthy life. A person who is sick has the right to medical care.

This weekend is our Diocesan Public Policy Weekend. Each year the Public Policy Committee picks an issue to advocate to the government by signing petitions. This year our issue is “Access to Health Care.”

Now, initially our petitions were going to call for the federal government to pass the updated S-CHIP program. The S-CHIP program is a federal program that assists the states in providing health insurance to children.

The program has its problems. There is always a question of cost-effectiveness of government programs. It is meant to be a children’s health insurance program but some say a lot of adults are covered by it. It isn’t a bad thing to insure adults; it just makes the name wrong. Ultimately we want to ensure good health care for everyone. We start with children because they can’t get it for themselves.

However, with the petitions the federal government threw a curve ball but it is a good curve ball. They just passed the S-CHIP bill last week before we had a chance to ask you to sign petitions.

So the petition has been changed. It begins now by thanking the government for passing the S-CHIP bill for low and moderate income families (up to 300% of poverty level) and it calls for continuing concern for the dignity of each person, special care for the poor and the vulnerable, consideration of the common good, justice and reasonable use of our resources.

There will be people at each entrance after Mass with the petitions. All you have to do is print your name and address and sign the petition. I hope you will help us as we work for continued health care for the poor and vulnerable.

If you think it seems strange to sign a petition for something that has already passed let me offer three comments. First, don't we get upset at people who keep coming to us when they need something but never say thank you. Well, here is your chance to say thank you.

Secondly, there is still work to be done. This is only a beginning. Finally, I like to think that the reason they passed the bill was that they knew there would be a big response to our petitions. Let's show them this is true.