

## Homily for Health Care Sabbath at All Saints'

*Sunday, August 30, 2009*

*Martha Lynch*

Today, along with other houses of faith, we lift up in prayer, the distress surrounding health care in our country.

There are people who receive healthcare abundantly . . . but there are many who endure limited access to care, . . . millions whose care is delayed until it becomes an emergency. . . and worse yet, others for whom medical care never comes. Many, many people are suffering . . . and left out from receiving even basic care to maintain their health and treat disease.

In a very personal way, I have become more aware of the broken-ness of our healthcare system.

In April, my husband Jim was among twenty-five others in his company who lost their jobs. Though he has actively sought employment each day since, he has not yet found any. We are. . . with a little help. . . able to extend insurance coverage through COBRA. But, our access to medical care is very limited now, . . . because deductibles, co-pays, and other expenses not covered by insurance are cost prohibitive.

There is treatment we have put off. Soon, our COBRA premiums nearly triple. . . . then, we are at risk of losing our health insurance. When new employment does come, pre-existing conditions make obtaining insurance worrisome, because the possibility exists that two of us may be denied coverage.

Health care reform has become an issue, which in public discussion, has been safely intellectualized, and very politicized. There is much talking. . . even yelling. . . we are crippled by anger and fear . . . wounds that never healed are being torn open. . . . we are separated us into 'me' and 'other'. It seems our nation is overcome by a spiritual deafness, and few are listening at all.

But this is not an *issue* for discussion. . . . this is about *people*. . .

So . . . what is God calling people of faith called to do? . . . what does Scripture tell us to inform our response? . . . . .

We know that, God calls us to be in relationship with Him. . . . We are called to make time for silence. . . . and be regular in prayer and worship. If we are intentional about growing in faith, . . . .we are better able to resist the fear that can

undermine it . . . . and more open to hearing the whisper of God on our souls.

We are also called to listen to and study the stories of Scripture. This morning, the psalm and readings inform us about how we are to care for each other . . . . . and the Gospel provides examples for living out those directions.

In Psalm 146, it is written, that our LORD . . . . . gives justice, - gives food, - sets free, - opens, - lifts, - loves, - cares, - and sustains. The psalmist illustrates God's abundant love, which leaves no one out.

The familiar commandment "*You shall love your neighbor as yourself*" is referred to in the Letter of James as the royal law, because of its elevated status in the teachings of Jesus. Love here, is not a feeling . . .love is an action. We are instructed to love everyone. . . without distinction or partiality. . . and to reject the notion that the social position, wealth, or appearance of a person reflects his or her worth in the eyes of God.

Over and over we hear that *no one* is outside the loving embrace of God. In the Gospel of Mark, two stories are sewn together. . . in which Jesus heals. . . And ordinary people participate in bringing wholeness. . . . by speaking up on behalf of the one in need.

There was the Gentile woman . . . Considered an outsider, who had come uninvited . . . yet, there she stood. . . boldly insistent, believing that God's restorative love extends to everyone. . . including her daughter. . . . Her feet would not be moved. . . even by Jesus. Through faith, she knew of God's mercy. . . and in her faith she found courage.

And. . . the friends of the deaf man, who knew of his need, and took him to find healing. . . They looked closely enough to be *aware* of his suffering. . . and turned toward him, rather than away.

Both are examples for us ordinary, everyday people.

Ted Kennedy was also an ordinary person. Like all of us, he was imperfect . . . . . and he knew his share of struggle. . . but this man of faith answered the Gospel imperative . . . . perhaps most notably, by being an ever-constant voice. . . calling out for those of us who are privileged with good medical care. . . to open wide the circle and include people who go without.

From the scripture passages, I hear a message that when everyone is included, there is *still* enough.

With all of this in mind,. . . . . amidst the confusion and pain around health care.  
. . . what can we do? I wonder . . . if listening to each other can tell us something?

This past year, it has been humbling for me to hear many stories from people who have lived without medical care - and so much else - for a long time. In these moments of *blessed grace*, I have felt an abiding connection to people I had never met before. Hearing their part of our collective story has changed my understanding and moved me, in ways that I trust can only be the touch of the Holy Spirit.

I have found listening to the stories of another to be a sacred experience.

At first, listening may seem passive, but in looking more closely, it is *anything* but. When we listen deeply. . .and bear pain or celebrate joy with another. . . . *we have loved*. Not sentimental love . . . True, sacramental love. . . where we enter into communion with one another.

It is on that Holy Ground where we know that we are all *one body* in Christ. . . . .  
.that there *is truly no 'other'*. What affects one, affects us all.

I wonder . . . if we pray our way. . . . and open ourselves up to the possibility of profound inter-connectedness . . . I wonder if answers will come more clear. . .  
.and we will know what to *do*.

The Reverend Jim Wallis of Sojourners, reminds us that people of faith have are called to be truth-tellers, . . . and, he has suggested that during this time, . . . . . it is important for those who will make decisions about health care reform . . .to hear, what he describes as. . . '*a steady moral drum beat by people of faith*'. . . . What a powerful image!. . .drums can at once gather a unifying calm, and at the same time, ignite intentional movement of a people.

May there be health and wholeness for all God's people. . . and may the God who loves abundantly continue to sustain us in the work ahead.

AMEN.