“God created man in his image; in the divine image, he created them: male and female he created them.” Genesis 1:27

Today Christians across the world will line up to receive ashes on their forehead. As the sign of the cross is traced they will be called to, “turn away from sin and be faithful to the gospel.” This Lent, let us consider what it means for Catholic health care to be faithful to the gospel and live out our core commitments.

In his book, Barking to the Choir, Jesuit priest Fr. Greg Boyle tells of a time he and a brother Jesuit were reading the paper on a Sunday afternoon after mass when the doorbell rang. “Initially, Al and I hid behind our papers waiting it out. The doorbell rarely rang, but when it did, it was almost always some homeless person. Finally, Al, the better man, quietly put down his paper … Some ten minutes later he returned, sat down, took a sip of coffee and resumed reading. After a few beats I asked, without lowering the paper, “Well?” “Well what?” Al replied, not lowering his paper either. “Who was it?” From behind the sports section he said, “Jesus in his least recognizable form.”

As the Church’s ministry of health care, we commit to promote and defend human dignity. We affirm the face of Christ in all people. One of the most basic beliefs in our tradition is that each person, created in the image and likeness of God, is a sacred and singular gift. Each one bears within them a mark of love, possessing inherent value and unsurpassed worth.

Created in the image of God who is Trinity, our deepest fulfillment comes when we are in relationships and communities, which cherish and uphold the dignity of each person.

For this reason, Catholic health care must treat the individuals, families and communities we serve with profound respect and the utmost regard. We immerse ourselves deeply in the community to listen for and meet the needs as we find them. We make choices around care that uphold and protect human dignity at all stages of life and seek to work with each other in ways that honor the image of God we create together.

For Reflection

“I believe in person to person. Every person is Christ for me, and since there is only one Jesus, that person is the one person in the world at that moment. I see Christ in every person I touch; it is as simple as that,” said the Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta.
Reflection for Ash Wednesday

Do I / we show respect for the dignity of others – co-workers, patients, leaders, residents, visitors in what we do?
Do I / we work to protect the dignity of life for all members of our community?
Do I / we recognize the face of Christ reflected in others, friends, family and stranger, regardless of race, class, age or ability?

Prayer

Let us pray together,

Almighty God, with a word you create us in your image and likeness. Give us new hearts, new spirits, to see your face shining through in the faces of others. Break our hearts of stone and give us hearts of flesh that are open to the beauty, depth, joys and trials of your children. In this season of reflection and prayer, give us the graces we need to more fully follow you and become who we claim to be in your name. Amen.