“He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”

*Micah 6:8*

The commitment to justice is essential in Catholic tradition. From the witness of the prophets who call us to “do justice, love kindness and walk humbly,” and the prayer to “let justice roll down like a mighty river,” to the parables of Jesus, which lift up the poor and overturn the social order, justice is the lived commitment to God’s love and hope for the world. Justice involves both personal and systematic effort, individuals and organizations, relationships as well as structures; it is about what we do for others and therefore what we do for God.

The question of justice in the health care setting is particularly poignant where human vulnerability is so much on display. It is not about simply ensuring that everyone has an equal share, but that everyone has what he or she needs to flourish. Justice takes the particular details of our lives into consideration. Imagine three people attempting to reach an object on a shelf. Giving them three boxes of the same size would be fair, but only if the people are the same height. What happens for the person who is 5’3”, the one in a wheelchair? Did the man who is 6’7” need a box in the first place?

“An essential element of our religious tradition regarding human rights is the understanding that the works of mercy and the works of justice are inseparable. … The works of mercy call Christians to engage themselves in direct efforts to alleviate the misery of the afflicted. The works of justice require that Christians involve themselves in sustained struggle to correct any unjust social, political and economic structures and institutions which are the cause of suffering.” *Health and Health Care: A Pastoral Letter*, p.6

In this season of reflection, we need to look at the ways we participate or even benefit from unjust systems. Moved to conversion, we hear and act on the Gospel imperative to create just relationships in a just world.

**For Reflection**

Saint John Paul II said, “Love for others, and in the first place, love for the poor, in whom the Church sees Christ himself, is made concrete in the promotion of justice.”

- Do I / we seek out and meet the needs of others?
Reflection for the Fourth Week of Lent

- Do I / we work to make sure others can meet their own needs with dignity?
- Do I / we try to make positive contributions in our families and in our communities?
- Do I / we support the grassroots efforts of people working for change in their neighborhoods and communities?
- Do my / our attitudes and interactions empower or disempower others?

Prayer

Let us pray together,

Jesus, ever merciful and just, dying on the cross you were stretched out between heaven and earth with your arms wide. Let the memory of your crucified body be a lesson for us; in opening our arms wide to others, we make of ourselves a bridge to your love, mercy, justice and peace in the world. 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.