“For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ.”
1 Corinthians 12:12

Created in the image and likeness of God, the human person is not only sacred, but also social. Just as God is a radical community we call Trinity—in which each person shares equally and gives of themselves fully—the human community is most itself when all give so that each person has a full share of what they need to reach their full God-given potential.

A story is told of an old farmer whose corn crop consistently won first prize at the state fair. Bright yellow, juicy and sweet, the corn became a legend. After a decade-long streak of winning, a reporter interviewed the farmer about his strategy. The humble man surprised everyone by admitting his method was to share his best seed corn with his neighbors.

“How can you afford to share your best seed corn with the same people you compete against every year?” the reporter asked.

The farmer replied, “Don’t you know? The wind picks up pollen from the ripening corn and swirls it from field to field. If my neighbors grow inferior corn, cross-pollination will steadily degrade the quality of my fields. If I am to grow good corn, I must help my neighbors grow good corn.”

Our Western, industrialized, individualist culture struggles with the notion of common good in which some limit their own freedom and wants for the sake of others. Common good requires sacrifices from those who are comfortable and have a surplus, to ensure that those who are afflicted and vulnerable are able to gain what they need to fully flourish. What is good, must be common to all.

Consider the family who limits where they go on vacation to accommodate a member with disabilities, or the daycare who bans peanut butter treats for all children because some are allergic. The activists who rallied for desegregated schools and the policy makers who ensure vaccinations are available to all people are agents of the common good.
In *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, Fr. David Hollenbach, Ph.D., offers the following thought, “The human likeness to God is [in our] capacity for relationships of love, mutual communion, and solidarity with each other.” He goes on to name the three moral priorities of the common good: attention to each person’s human dignity, prioritization of the poor and marginalized, and the importance of participation.

As institutions and as people working in the Catholic health care ministry, we are accountable to the common good. We are our brothers’ and sisters’ keeper. We have been given gifts that are not for us alone. Our gifts and our resources are for the good of all God’s people.

**For Reflection**

Because the health and well-being of each person is intimately related to the health and well-being of the broader community, Catholic health care promotes the “economic, political and social conditions that ensure protection for the fundamental rights of all individuals and enable them to fulfill their common purpose and reach their common goals.” (*Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services*, 2001, Part One, pp. 8-9)

- Do I / we participate in local, state and federal advocacy initiatives?
- Do I / we listen to and include the voice of others in making decisions that affect their work or life?
- Do I / we consider gifts and talents as ones for our own benefit or ones to be used for the good of the community?
- Am I / are we willing to have less so that others can have what they need?

**Prayer**

Let us pray together,

God of community, you create the human race to be a reflection of your goodness and glory. Bring us to a richer understanding of the common good of all creation that you have asked us to guard. Move us to make choices that benefit the good of all people, particularly those who are not able to help themselves. May the common good be lamp, journey and destination. 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.