

# PREACHING THE GOOD NEWS

**W**e have just moved into a season where the news of Jesus' triumph over death will be front and center in our liturgical celebrations. As we passed through the celebration of the paschal mystery, we experienced suffering, the tomb of human death and the promise of eternal life fulfilled.



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I suppose my Dominican training always makes me wonder, "How do we preach about that?" It is relatively easy to deliver a packaged homily on the aspects of the paschal mystery, to talk solemnly about Christ's death on the cross, or joyfully about his triumph over death. But as every preacher knows, the hard part is the "so what?" question. What does the paschal

mystery mean to us in the particular details of our lives?

I raise this because we in Catholic health care have become skilled at addressing health care challenges ethically and clinically, but we have not been as successful looking at them from a theological or spiritual perspective. What does Christ's death and resurrection have to say to the current debate about euthanasia and assisted suicide? Should our perspective be different because we believe that, ultimately, God created us not just "to love him and serve him in this world," as the Baltimore Catechism so succinctly states it, but to be happy with him forever? If resurrection is our ultimate destiny, should that not shape our views about chronic illness, treatment options and even decisions to forgo life-sustaining treatment? Should meditation on the paschal mystery not be a part of our preparation for death as the final step in Christian life? Can we do a better job of preparing for death?

## JUSTICE

What about justice, a common biblical value? Although the biblical writers could not have imagined the array of health care resources we have today in the United States, clearly they would have considered these resources to be part of the

God-given treasure that belongs to all of us. These resources should be distributed justly. Pope Benedict XVI reminded us in his encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* about the distinction between the logic of business and the logic of gift. Business is based on value exchanges, as *though* we actually own everything we buy and sell. But from a biblical perspective, everything must be allocated in a way that reflects its origin in God. This is especially true of health care, which is the result of great collaboration, learning and human suffering. What does just distribution of these goods look like?

## SOLIDARITY

Solidarity is also a resurrection value. In his suffering and death, Jesus demonstrated radical solidarity with us, but solidarity remains abstract unless we recall that it is based on the conviction that we are, as human beings, one family. We have more in common than not, even with people who are geographically, socially or economically distant from us. The virtue of solidarity is exactly what is at stake in the global refugee crisis. What would it mean for immigration policy if we acted out of a Christ-like solidarity with these refugees?

So I invite preachers to reflect on these real-life dilemmas and think about how they can address them in their preaching. Physicians and other caregivers need to understand how these values inform their work. Ethicists and mission leaders, who are responsible for articulating these values and bringing them into policy, need to hear them. And Catholics in the pews — including those who are board members, sponsors, and executives — need to hear them too.

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