

EDITOR'S NOTE

My dad was already a young man when the Depression set in, pulled from high school to help support a very large, very poor family. It shaped his habits for life: make sure you can take care of yourself and the people you're responsible for; save and stretch so you can help family and friends when they need it; give quietly to the charities whose envelopes are in the top dresser drawer; never vote for government entitlements. Several of his descendants have been or currently are on Medicaid. I wonder if he'd be dismayed or relieved that it was there when they needed it.



**MARY ANN
STEINER**

In what spirit could Jesus have told us “The poor you will always have with you”? It must have made a big impression on his disciples, because it appears in all four Gospels. Did he say it in resignation, as in “Will you never get this right? Must some of my cherished ones always be impoverished?” Or was it an indictment delivered like an Old Testament

prophet: “You are a hard-hearted people who refuse to follow the law of love I gave you!”

Some scholars consider it code for Jesus’ understanding of the Talmud and thus a reference to the Hebrew Scripture’s wisdom about poverty. Deuteronomy 15:11 says “The needy will never be lacking in the land; that is why I command you to open your hand to the poor and needy in your country.”

Could he have meant it as a blessing? Because Jesus, the Messiah who sought out the poor, sick, shamed and exploited, may have recognized that we would need each other — the safe and prosperous, the sick and vulnerable, the poor in treasures and the poor in spirit — to know his heart and learn his ways. That the poor will always be with us may give us the many occasions we need to recognize our kindred spirits in the poverty Jesus called blessed.

This issue of *Health Progress* is focused on Medicaid from the lens of justice. The Catholic Health Association’s strong support of Medicaid as a program that should be retained, reformed and expanded is grounded in our belief that each

of us has been created in God’s own image, each worthy of the dignity that entails. It is an act of justice to protect the right to health care through strong policy. It is compassionate and charitable to extend our caring beyond what is just.

Medicaid is a complicated subject, and we have availed ourselves of experts within and outside our ministries to explain how Medicaid works, what expansion means, why work requirements are so controversial, and what block grants and per capita caps would entail for people who access Medicaid and for those who care for them. We thank each of our authors for explaining, informing and inspiring us about Medicaid.

It is a stroke of good timing that an issue of *Health Progress* focused on advocating for Medicaid should coincide with the retirement announcement of Michael Rodgers, CHA’s senior vice president of advocacy and public policy for the past 11 years. Mike’s leadership was crucial to CHA’s efforts for passage of the Affordable Care Act, and has been ongoing in our work for children’s health and eldercare. He provided helpful direction/guidance for topics and authors of this issue on Medicaid. Thank you, Mike. We will miss your strong, guiding hand.

We are so happy to welcome Betsy Taylor as the new managing editor of *Health Progress*. You may recognize Betsy’s name and journalistic excellence from our sister publication, *Catholic Health World*, where she served as associate editor for more than five years.

Happy New Year from your friends at *Health Progress*. May the peace we yearn for abound in the coming year.

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