

Prayer

S E R V I C E

"We are the people of Catholic health care. . . . We work to bring alive the Gospel vision of justice and peace" ("A Shared Statement of Identity for the Catholic Health Ministry"). For us, this vision is one in which all persons share in the goods of creation, all

CALL TO PRAYER

have what they need for the flourishing of themselves and their families. And from our particular perspective in the church's ministry of healing, we recognize that true justice means all persons have access to quality health care. For the realization of this vision, we are noisy advocates, we raise our voices in the public square, and we raise our voices in prayer.

Jeremiah 1:4-10

The word of the Lord came to me thus:

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,

before you were born I dedicated you,

a prophet to the nations I appointed you.

"Ah, Lord God," I said,

"I know not how to speak; I am too young."

But the Lord answered me,

Say not, "I am too young,"

To whomever I send you, you shall go;

whatever I command you, you shall speak.

Have no fear before them,

because I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord.

Then the Lord extended his hand and touched

my mouth, saying,

See, I place my words in your mouth!

This day I set you

over nations and over kingdoms,

To root up and to tear down,

to destroy and to demolish,

to build and to plant.

Suggested Music: "Here I Am, Lord"; "Lord of All Nations, Grant Me Grace"
(GIA Publications, Inc., 1996)

How like Jeremiah we often feel! Inhibited by our own sense of limitations, we feel insufficient to the task of speaking out against injustice. But, like Jeremiah, each of us has been appointed prophet. Each administrator and admitting clerk, CEO and CNA,

REFLECTION

physician, nurse, housekeeper, laundry worker . . . every one of us is called to speak out for justice. While more than

41 million of our neighbors lack access to the health care that is their right, we must speak out for change. In their 1986 pastoral letter, *Economic Justice for All*, the bishops of the United States called us to such advocacy, to "conversion and common action, to new forms of stewardship, service, and citizenship."

The bishops continued: "The pursuit of economic justice takes believers into the public arena, testing the policies of government by the principles of our teaching. We ask you to become more informed and active citizens, using your voices and votes to speak for the voiceless, to defend the poor and the vulnerable, and to advance the common good. We are called to shape a constituency of conscience, measuring every policy by how it touches the least, the lost, and the left-out among us" (para. 27).

Our commitments to promote the common good and to care for poor and vulnerable persons lead us to speak out. How? A conversation with family members or friends is as much advocacy as a speech broadcast over the airwaves. A letter to a local or state lawmaker is as much advocacy as lobbying in the halls of Congress. And for the followers of Christ who believe in the transforming power of His Holy Spirit, prayer is also advocacy. And so together we pray:

O God, you have called us to join in the work of your mission. You gave us your dual commandment of love

CLOSING PRAYER

for you and for our neighbors. You urge us to do the work of justice. You pull us forward toward your dream of peace

and fulfillment for all people. Send us your Holy Spirit to open our eyes, fill our hearts, and raise our voices with the words of your message. Make us effective in our challenge of injustice, O God, because the changes we cause, the ground we gain, and the help we provide to our brothers and sisters and those we will never know bring us ever closer to you. Lead us to speak out. Amen.

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