

Lent Reflection on Health Care and Racial Justice

A toddler asks her father to play peek-a-boo, again.

A coach yells for the team to run the play, again.

A writer scraps his draft and begins, again.

A patient starts a round of chemotherapy, again.

Turn again. Try again. Begin again. Do it again. “Again” is the refrain of Lent. We are called to come back once more to God. We start our journey anew and recommit to our spiritual practices. But why? And to what end? Are we coming back with the joy of the toddler, the discipline of the athlete, the humility of the writer or the tenacity of the patient?

This Lent we cannot turn a blind eye to the structural reinforcements of racism in our country or the systemic impact of racism on the health of our black and brown sisters and brothers. We need to look again at how we value black, indigenous and people of color across our systems.

In health care, especially Catholic health care, this means confronting the facts. Facts like, black infant mortality is nearly double that of white infant mortality and black maternal mortality is three times that of their white counterparts. Facts like, Latinos having a 66% greater risk of developing type 2 diabetes and, once diagnosed, exhibiting worse outcomes than non-Hispanic whites. Facts, like American Indians and Alaska Natives born today have a life expectancy that is 5.5 years less than the U.S. all races population.

Confronting those facts forces us to consider our relationship and face the reality that our black and brown brothers and sisters do not trust the health care system which again and again fails them. Black patients in the U.S. are less likely to receive proper care for diabetes, kidney disease and cancers even though they have higher rates of most diseases.

Scripture speaks to us of the beauty of repentance and beginning again. “Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus.” *Acts 3:19-20*



REFLECTION

Our repentance this season must consider what needs to be dismantled and built again. Where does our work for justice, equity and inclusion need to start again? How do we lift up the practices, books, leaders and actions that will guide us to on our antiracist journey? How do we try again to rend our hearts, pulling up the roots of racism where they grow?

May our walk this Lent be about blotting out the sin of racism — together and entirely — that we may all fully experience the presence of God in the light of Christ.

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