

Compassion in the 21C: Integrating Mission, Ethics & Social Justice

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The Meaning of Compassion Here?

- Jason is a 32 week gestation infant born to a 34yr old mother who has had five previous miscarriages. This is her first live-born child.
- Jason has multiple congenital anomalies some of which are life-threatening.
- His parents want ‘everything done’ for him.



The Meaning of Compassion Here?

- Marion is a 47yr old wife and mother of four teenagers. She has metastatic breast cancer and is not responding to a 4th course of chemotherapy. She is demanding access to expensive, innovative treatment as her “last chance”





The Meaning of Compassion Here?

- Paul, 80yr has Alzheimers disease and diabetes with many complications including amputations. He has been cared for at home by his wife, Jean, who promised she would never put him “in a home.”
- Now, he is in renal failure





The Meaning of Compassion Here?

- Emma, is a 72yr old woman living on the street. She is well-known to ER for cuts and bruises from being 'roughed up' regularly.
- She was admitted to ICU with severe injuries a month ago and after much care is now ready for discharge.
- She has nowhere to go.



Compassion

- Is not mercy with its sense of forbearance and leniency
- Is not empathy-the capacity to feel with another
- Is not sympathy-a sense of feeling for
- Is not pity with its notion of inequality



Compassion is a Robust Virtue

- Compassion has two movements:
 - A *co-suffering*; an empathic understanding of what it must be like
 - A commitment to *do something* about the suffering



Integrating Mission, Ethics & Social Justice

- The mission of Catholic health care is core
- Ethics (moral theology) is about right decision and good action AND virtue and character-becoming the person God calls us to be.
- Social justice is about sharing in power (compared with distributive justice)

Mission

- The foundational mission of Catholic health care is to continue the healing and reconciling mission of Jesus Christ in the circumstances of contemporary health care
- Especially in unmet needs (The Sister's Legacy)





Christ the Physician

- The healing and reconciling mission of Jesus Christ
 - *Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and sickness” (Matt 9:35)*



Jesus' Care

- Physical cure

- Healing of the whole person
 - Restores the 'disintegration' of serious and life-threatening illness
 - Body, mind and spirit

- Restoration to the community



Some cures

- Woman with hemorrhage (Luke 8:40-48)-on the way to Jarius' daughter
- Man born blind (John 9: 1-10)
- The leper (Luke 5:12-16)
- Lazarus (John 11: 1-45)



Ethics/Morality

- Ethics (moral theology) is about right decision and good action AND virtue and character-becoming the person God calls us to be.
- Both individuals and institutions act as moral/ethical agents



General Approaches to Ethics

- How do we judge the right and good?
 - Deontological-duty-based ethics
 - Teleological-focused on the *end* or consequences
 - For Christians the ultimate end is union with God
 - Virtue-based-focused on character and moral agency



Sources of Moral Wisdom in Catholic Tradition

- Scripture
- Tradition, especially Magisterial teaching
- Experience
- Reason



Some Catholic Insights

- Life and physical health are precious gifts entrusted to us by God. We must take reasonable care of them, taking into account the needs of others and the common good.
 - Catechism #2288
- If morality requires respect for the life of the body, it does not make it an absolute value.
 - Catechism #2289

PART TWO



Health Care & Justice

- The health and healing concerns of the Christian community are not limited to, and much less exhausted by its focus on the health of individuals as such; it extends also to the physical and social environment in which the community lives and works.... Working to promote health and well-being is not only about curing symptoms, it also means confronting the social and political causes of suffering and injustice.
 - Pastoral Letter –CCCB Permanent Council 2005

Catholic Social Teaching

- Dignity of each person
- Social nature of persons and solidarity with the whole of creation
- Subsidiarity
- Preferential option for the poor
- The common good



The Common Good

“...the sum total of social condition which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily.”

Gaudium et Spes (Para 74)



The *Good* of Health Care?

- “...we share a responsibility to ensure that the primary purpose of our socio-economic order should be to develop resources to serve the basic needs of all people for a fully human life. These include such basic needs as adequate food, clothing, housing, education, employment, health care and energy.”
 - Ethical Choices and Political Challenges” CCCB, 1984

Caritas in Veritate

- “The Church forcefully maintains this link between life ethics and social ethics...(par15)
- “...today’s cultural struggle between the supremacy of technology and human moral responsibility” (par75)



Critically Examine The ‘Right’ to Health Care

- “...a human being has the right to security in sickness”
 - John XXIII *Pacem in Terris* n11



Critically Examine: Limits & 'Fair Share'

- Life and physical health are precious gifts entrusted to us by God. We must take reasonable care of them, taking into account the needs of others and the common good.

➤ Catechism #2288





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