VI
CARE FOR THOSE WHO ARE POOR
Mercy Heritage Celebration - 2009

All: Blessed is anyone who cares for the poor and the weak; in time of trouble Yahweh rescues him. (Psalm 41:1)

Presider: Welcome. This year we contemplate the core value of Commitment To Those Who Are Poor, in which we give priority to those whom society ignores. As we celebrate the service of our colleagues at all our branches, we take some time to reflect on the heritages from which our healthcare has grown: the Sisters of Mercy through the charism of Catherine McAuley, The Franciscans through the charism of Saint Francis of Assisi, and the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth through the love and example of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Each of these had a deep love of the poor and worked to care for them. Likewise, we acknowledge and value all our Mercy colleagues who live this core value through our work.

Reader: What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well,” but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it? So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

Indeed someone might say, “You have faith and I have works.” Demonstrate your faith to me without works, and I will demonstrate my faith to you from my works. (James 2:14-18)

Presider: Our loyalty to the core value of Commitment to Those Who Are Poor flows directly from Catherine McAuley’s leadership: “The spirit of mercy and compassion for the poor which animated and, as it were consumed her, made her sometimes adopt plans for their relief which to some, appeared beyond the limits of prudence, but the success with which her undertakings were usually attended showed that she was guided by a heavenly wisdom.” (Tender Courage – A reflection of the Life and Spirit of Catherine McAuley, first Sister of Mercy)

All: Keep a clear eye toward life’s end.
Do not forget your purpose and destiny as God’s creature.
What you are in God’s sight is what you are and nothing more.
Do not let worldly cares and anxieties or the pressure of office blot out the Divine life within you or the voice of God’s Spirit guiding, in your great task of leading humanity to wholeness.
If you open yourself to God and His plans printed deeply in your heart, God will open God’s self to you.

Remember that when you leave this earth you can take with you nothing that you have received—fading symbols of honor, trappings of power but only what you have given; a full heart enriched by honest service, love, sacrifice, and courage.

Embrace the God of us all, and God’s Word, wherever it surfaces.
Imitate God’s preference for the poor and powerless.
Enter into God’s plan of liberating all peoples from everything that oppresses them and obstructs their development as human beings.
Do not grow tired of working for peace among all people.
Help remove unjust social structures and patterns of exploitation. 
Uphold the rights and dignity of the human person. 
Foster the creation of a society where human life is cherished and where all people of the planet can enjoy its gifts which God created for all in a Spirit of love and justice and equality.  
(Saint Francis of Assisi, Letter to the Rulers of the People to all Leaders and Representatives of the People, Early 1600’s)

Presider: Through our work here at Mercy, we do work to foster the creation of a society where human life is cherished, upholding the (healthcare) rights and dignity of the person. At our conclusion, all are invited to take a Core Value card (to be worn with your Mercy colleague ID badge) as a reminder how each of you embraces our Vision, Mission, and Core Values in your special contribution to our delivery of home healthcare. “Mercy starts with me” comes alive as we bring the charism of those who came before us, embracing this ministry, each in our own way:

Readers:  
• In the steps of Catherine McAuley, foundress of the Sisters of Mercy, we collaborate in the healing ministry, which she herself began by visiting the sick in their homes, by visiting those whom society ignores, through our Commitment To Those Who Are Poor.  
• We reach out to one another respectfully and inclusively - to our colleagues in the office and in the field, in practicing Reverence for Each Person and Community.  
• Through our core values of Justice and Stewardship we advocate so all may achieve the common good, while caring for and strengthening the resources entrusted to us, enabling us to reach those in need of healing, especially the most vulnerable.  
• Each of us affects all with whom we come in contact, changing the course of the world by our presence, strongly reflecting Courage and Integrity, those core values which challenge us to accept risk to do what is right. We enable those around us to have confidence in us, since we are faithful to who we say we are.

Presider: We shall close with a short reflection to acknowledge and thank you for the work you do and the change this makes in our society. You “change the face of the mountain” through your commitment to excellence in healthcare, reverence in working with colleagues and others, and your special Commitment to Those Who Are Poor, truly living our Mission.
#1 Omitted for copyright reasons. Please see Education for Justice - Prayer Service for the Eradication of Poverty at:

https://educationforjustice.org/resources/prayer-service-eradication-poverty

*Membership to Education for Justice may be required to access this resource
Prayer for the Poor
Bl. Mother Teresa of Calcutta

Who is Jesus to me? Jesus is the Word made Flesh. Jesus is the Bread of Life. Jesus is the Victim offered for our sins on the Cross. Jesus is the Sacrifice at Holy Mass for the sins of the world and mine. Jesus is the Word - to be spoken. Jesus is the Truth - to be told. Jesus is the Way - to be walked. Jesus is the Light - to be lit. Jesus is the Life - to be loved. Jesus is the Joy - to be shared. Jesus is the Sacrifice - to be given. Jesus is the Bread of Life - to be eaten. Jesus is the Hungry - to be fed. Jesus is the Thirsty - to be satiated. Jesus is the Naked - to be clothed. Jesus is the Homeless - to be taken in. Jesus is the Sick - to be healed. Jesus is the Lonely - to be loved. Jesus is the Unwanted - to be wanted. Jesus is the Leper - to wash his wounds. Jesus is the Beggar - to give him a smile. Jesus is the Drunkard - to listen to him. Jesus is the Little One - to embrace him. Jesus is the Dumb - to speak to him. Jesus is the Crippled - to walk with him. Jesus is the Drug Addict - to befriend him. Jesus is the Prostitute - to remove from danger and befriend her. Jesus is the Prisoner - to be visited. Jesus is the Old - to be served. To me Jesus is my God, Jesus is my Spouse, Jesus is my Life, Jesus is my only Love, Jesus is my All in All, Jesus is my Everything. Amen.
Prayer Service for the Poor

Gospel (Luke 16:19-31)

Jesus said to the Pharisees:
“There was a rich man who dressed in purple garments and fine linen and dined sumptuously each
day. And lying at his door was a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who would gladly
have eaten his fill of the scraps that fell from the rich man's table. Dogs even used to come and lick
his sores. When the poor man died, he was carried away by angels to the bosom of Abraham. The
rich man also died and was buried, and from the netherworld, where he was in torment, he raised his
eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side.
And he cried out, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me. Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in
water and cool my tongue, for I am suffering torment in these flames.' Abraham replied, 'My child,
remember that you received what was good during your lifetime while Lazarus likewise received
what was bad; but now he is comforted here, whereas you are tormented. “Moreover, between us
and you a great chasm is established to prevent anyone from crossing who might wish to go from
our side to yours or from your side to ours.’ He said, 'Then I beg you, father, send him to my father's
house, for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they too come to this place of
torment.’ But Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the prophets. Let them listen to them.’ He
said, 'Oh no, father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' Then
Abraham said, 'If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if
someone should rise from the dead.'"

Meditation from Jean Vanier

This story of Lazarus tells us a lot about today’s world, where there is a huge abyss between
those who have food, money, and comfort and those who are hungry or have no place of their
own. I remember seeing children in Calcutta, their noses glued to the window of a luxurious
restaurant. From time to time, the doorman would shoo them away. The rich
– and that includes me and many of you – do not like to see dirty beggars staring at them.
Haven’t we all felt embarrassment and fear in front of those who are hungry?
One day in Paris, I was accosted by a rather disheveled woman who shouted at me:
“Give me some money!” We started to talk. I learned that she had just come out of a
psychiatric hospital; I realized quite quickly that she had immense needs and I became
frightened. I had an appointment and I didn’t want to be late, so I gave her a little money
and went on my way, just like the Pharisee and the Levite in the gospel parable of the Good
Samaritan. I was frightened of being swallowed up by her pain and her need.
What is this abyss that separates people? Why are we unable to look Lazarus straight in the eye
and listen to him?
I suspect that we exclude Lazarus because we are frightened that our hearts will be touched if
we enter into a relationship with him. If we listen to his story and hear his cry of
pain we will discover that he is a human being. We might be touched by his broken heart
and by his misfortunes. What happens when our hearts are touched? We might want to do something to comfort and help him, to alleviate his pain, and where will that lead us? As we enter into dialogue with a beggar, we risk entering into an adventure. Because Lazarus needs not only money but also a place to stay, medical treatment, maybe work, and, even more, he needs friendship.

That is why it is dangerous to enter into a relationship with the Lazaruses of our world. If we do, we risk our lives being changed. Fear makes us push those with intellectual disabilities into far-off, dismal institutions. Fear prevents all of us with the price of a meal in our pocket from sharing with the Lazaruses of the world. It is fear, ironically, that prevents us from being most human, from growing and changing. Fear wants nothing to change; fear demands the status quo. And the status quo leads to death.

CONCLUDING PRAYER
John Paul II, Evangelium Vitae

O Mary,
bright dawn of the new world,
Mother of the living,
to you do we entrust the cause of life
Look down, O Mother,
upon the vast numbers
of babies not allowed to be born,
of the poor whose lives are made difficult,
of men and women
who are victims of brutal violence,
of the elderly and the sick killed
by indifference or out of misguided mercy.
Grant that all who believe in your Son may proclaim the Gospel of life
with honesty and love
to the people of our time.
Obtain for them the grace
to accept that Gospel
as a gift ever new,
the joy of celebrating it with gratitude
throughout their lives
and the courage to bear witness to it resolutely, in order to build, together
with all people of good will,
the civilization of truth and love,
to the praise and glory of God,
the Creator and lover of life.


All scripture texts are from the New American Bible.
Prayer Service for Care of the Poor

Psalm 140:6-13

A: I say to the Lord, “You are my God; give ear, O Lord, to the voice of my supplications.”

B: O Lord, my Lord, my strong deliverer, you have covered my head in the day of battle.

A: Do not grant, O Lord, the desires of the wicked; do not further their evil plot.

B: Those who surround me lift up their heads; let the mischief of their lips overwhelm them!

A: Let burning coals fall on them! Let them be flung into pits, no more to rise!

B: Do not let the slanderer be established in the land; let evil speedily hunt down the violent!

A: I know that the Lord maintains the cause of the needy, and executes justice for the poor.

B: Surely the righteous shall give thanks to your name; the upright shall live in your presence.

Matthew 25:31-45

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’ Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?’ Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.”
Meditation:

The Cave by Mumford and Sons
YouTube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qg02E_2QAw

It's empty in the valley of your heart
The sun, it rises slowly as you walk
Away from all the fears
And all the faults you've left behind

The harvest left no food for you to eat
You cannibal, you meat-eater, you see
But I have seen the same
I know the shame in your defeat

But I will hold on hope
And I won't let you choke
On the noose around your neck

And I'll find strength in pain
And I will change my ways
I'll know my name as it's called again

Cause I have other things to fill my time
You take what is yours and I'll take mine
Now let me at the truth
Which will refresh my broken mind

So tie me to a post and block my ears
I can see widows and orphans through my tears
I know my call despite my faults
And despite my growing fears

But I will hold on hope
And I won't let you choke
On the noose around your neck

And I'll find strength in pain
And I will change my ways
I'll know my name as it's called again

…So come out of your cave walking on your hands
And see the world hanging upside down
You can understand dependence
When you know the maker's land

So make your siren's call
And sing all you want
I will not hear what you have to say

Cause I need freedom now
And I need to know how
To live my life as it's meant to be

And I will hold on hope
And I won't let you choke
On the noose around your neck

And I'll find strength in pain
And I will change my ways
I'll know my name as it's called again

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, You who willed to become poor,
give us eyes and a heart directed toward the poor; help us to recognize you in them—\textit{in} their thirst, their hunger, their loneliness, and their misfortune. Enkindle within us unity, simplicity, humility, and the fire of love that burned in St. Vincent de Paul. Strengthen us, so that, faithful to the practice of these virtues, we may contemplate you and serve you in the person of the poor, and may one day be united with you and them in your Kingdom.
Amen.

(Prayer adapted from the Society of St. Vincent de Paul)