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Let's agree: Health care is a human right, yes?

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Do you ever listen to C-SPAN?s ?Washington Journal? in the morning? The moderators announce a topic and then welcome callers with every conceivable opinion on that subject. The fare ranges from brilliant to idiotic.

Recently, health care reform has been a focus. I have to admit that I shudder inside when I hear callers express sentiments like this: ?Well, I worked hard all my life, and I have good health insurance. Why should I worry about all these people who don?t have it? It?s their responsibility to do something about it.?

I find myself answering them out loud: ?As if they COULD do something about it!? I think about the 40-50 million who don?t have it either because they can?t afford it, have lost their jobs, or have been denied because of a pre-existing condition.

I often wish that our preachers ? Catholic and otherwise ? would emphasize the concept at the core of our social teaching: the common good. We are indeed responsible for one another. I do need to worry that my neighbor does not have health insurance. This sense of the ?common good? might mean chipping in (sometimes called ?taxes?) so that everyone has access to health insurance. It might mean working for a system where the profit motive does not raise prices beyond reach (for me, that?s ?single payer? or at least a ?public option?).

We might not agree on the specifics of what needs to be done, but surely we Catholics can recognize that health care is a human right, and that we have responsibility for one another. Isn?t that what the ?common good? is all about?

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