



Franciscan Action Network

Transforming the World in the Spirit of St. Francis and St. Clare

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A Franciscan View of Health Care

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Image from Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity – www.fhcm.org

*“For when I was in sin, it seemed too bitter for me to see lepers.
And God led me among them and I showed mercy to them.
And when I left them, what had seemed bitter to me
was turned into sweetness of soul and body.”
Testament of Francis of Assisi (1226, adapted)*

In the lives of Francis and Clare of Assisi, there are a number of experiences and teachings that form the foundation of an approach to health care advocacy. Two in particular guide us.

1. Francis' experience of encounter with the leper demonstrates his profound respect and care for the outcast in two ways. First, he experienced joy and fulfillment in overcoming an inclination toward disdain for the leper. This encounter was an essential part of his conversion. The second comes in his recognition of the preciousness of life, which finds its meaning through Sister Bodily Death.

2. In the canonization process for Clare of Assisi, we hear of numerous testimonies of her gracious healing of

her sisters, children and friars who were brought to her during her life. She healed each with a loving touch and the sign of the cross.

Franciscans and Franciscan hearted people - in collaboration with Franciscans who are involved in the ministry of health care and have a stake in health care reform - advocate for reform in accord with the vision of the Catholic Health Association (www.catholichealthcare.us). To that end we see health care promoting as core values:

- **Human Dignity**
- **Concern for the Poor and the Vulnerable**
- **Policies that Exercise Justice**
- **Policies that Promote the Common Good**
- **Policies that Encourage Stewardship of Health Care**
- **Policies the Reflect Pluralism**



Franciscan Action Network is inspired by the lives of Francis and Clare of Assisi in our advocacy. We are particularly animated by policy that affects the poor and the vulnerable. We believe that our care of the poor and the vulnerable will promote the common good. Through the inspiration of the lives of Francis & Clare, **we wholeheartedly support the value of a stewardship of health.** We find in Francis and Clare a profound appreciation of creation and the importance of faith. Policy must be based in honesty and recognize that health resources are limited. Choices should be made **on how these resources are allocated for the well being of the entire community and the promotion of public health.** Such a policy stance is founded within our own Franciscan tradition which recognizes the ultimate physical limitation of our lives - Sister Death's arrival - by God's invitation.

Our acceptance of eventual bodily death does not diminish our care for life. **We advocate for health care reform policies that promote human dignity so that everyone has access to a basic standard of health care.** And we urge our legislators to properly allocate funding to make that happen. We invite them to shape policies that emphasize **quality, cost efficiency, and patient-centered care for everyone.**

Such an effort will be both a living testimony to Francis of Assisi, who respected the creature in love of the Creator and cared for the outcast, and the honoring of a treasured memory of Clare of Assisi, who healed so graciously.