

Study and Discussion Questions for *Health Care is a Moral Right*.

1. The document uses several scripture passages as a foundation for the discussion of the Church's teaching on health care. Read the following passages and discuss their implications for catholic health care. Specifically, discuss how these passages should inform our own attitudes and actions with regard to health care issues. (Mt. 8:1-4; Mk 10:46-52; Lk 11:14; Mk 5:25-34; Mt 9:18, 23-25.)
2. The document also cites John XXIII's encyclical *Peace on Earth*. Read the following passage from this encyclical and discuss what it means relative to the issues facing health care in the United States.

"Any human society, if it is to be well-ordered and productive, must lay down as a foundation this principle, namely that every human being is a person; that is, his nature is endowed with intelligence and free will. Indeed, precisely because he is a person he has rights and obligations flowing directly and simultaneously from his nature. And these rights and obligations are universal and inviolable, so they cannot in any way be surrendered." (#9)
3. The bishops' document states that in 2005, "over 45 million persons do not have guaranteed access to basic health care." In Kentucky alone there are 577,650 people who don't have health insurance, including 100,000 children. What are the specific challenges that this statistic raises for Catholic health care? What is the responsibility of wider society to these persons?
4. The bishops further state that "the lack of access to affordable health care for so many children and adults in our country and in Kentucky is a structural injustice that harms people and undermines the common good." What is meant by a "structural injustice"? Can you think of any examples?
5. As Catholics, we believe passionately in the sacredness of human life. In the bishop's document the following statistics are offered: In one year 70% of the uninsured reported being sick but not seeking care; 54% skipped a test; 53% did not fill a prescription; and 42% did not see a specialist. Given our concern for the sacredness of human life, in all its stages, how do you react to these statistics?
6. In one year, 65% of uninsured Kentuckians had a problem paying a medical bill; 46% were contacted by a collection agency; 33% used up all or most of their savings; and 23% were unable to pay for basic necessities; 9% had to get a loan or another mortgage and 9% declared bankruptcy. These statistics show the heavy burden that individuals with sickness must often face. But the impact usually goes beyond the individual. What burden does the heavy cost of health care place on families and marriages? Why should that question be important to us and also to our state and national leaders?
7. The bishops' document also addresses the need for sound public policy regarding health care. They reiterate seven criteria for health care reform that flow from the Catholic faith. They are: Respect for Life; Priority Concern for the Poor; Universal

Access to Comprehensive Benefits; Pursuing the Common Good and Preserving Pluralism; Cost Containment and Controls, Equitable Financing; Quality. In your group, discuss how you might frame a letter to congressional and political leaders to make them aware of these issues and to encourage them to respond in a responsible but realistic way.

8. Currently in Kentucky, the Catholic Church and its agencies sponsor 17 acute care hospitals; 30 long-term care nursing facilities, and many other services such as hospice, home health, assisted living and senior housing. Part of this health care ministry is outreach to the poor. Catholic health care providers in Kentucky serve thousands of Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries and provide significant charity care in the tens of millions of dollars without reimbursement. Because of rising costs and the reality of competition, it is becoming increasingly difficult for Catholic health care institutions to remain faithful to their mission. What do you think the priorities should be for Catholic health care institutions? What are the limits?