

BULLETIN -- JULY 23

Free health care. Isn't this like "free public schools"? It means that those who make use of the service don't have to pay for it as you would for goods in a retail store. You don't generally purchase a "free" public education with your own money while you're receiving it. No one will send you a bill for the value of what you have received. It's a benefit of being a citizen. Similarly, you would not purchase "free" health care with your own money while you're receiving it, nor likely in the identical proportion as the amount you have received.

"Someone ought to pay for it!" That was the response I got some years ago from a parent here at the school who by the end of the month of September had not paid a registration fee, a book fee, or a dime of tuition toward her children's education. She had received notices each week of the amounts due, with warnings that failure to comply would result in her children's dismissal from the school. At the end of the month, I called to tell her not to bring them to school the following Monday. They were out. She screamed at me about how unfair it was that people had to pay for a Catholic education. "How," I asked her, "are we to pay our teachers unless we have the money to operate?" That's when she yelled, "*Someone* ought to pay for it!" I allowed that she was right, and that "someone" was the parents and parishioners who support the school with their tuition money and their offerings. When she and her family had gone to St. Mary's School years ago, she said, it was free and no one ever hounded them for money. I asked her if she knew the difference between St. Mary's School and ours. When she said, "No," I simply replied, "Ours is open." Times have changed, and ours is no longer open either. In 2009, we ran out of students, and so ran out of money as well.

It's amazing the things that people think they should receive for "free." In truth, the education and the health care we have referred to above are certainly not "free." They are paid for by taxpayers and/or by the government borrowing money which someday will have to be paid back by taxpayers. Our governments, federal, state, and local, have been and are as irresponsible in staying current on their debts as are many of us citizens. All the arguing about free health care and a single-payer system is wrapped up in a cry designed to tug at the heartstrings and the purse strings: "People will die!" This is sure to happen, the politicians assure us, unless *their* plan is adopted or the plan of the Terrible Other Party is defeated. People will surely die, they're right about that. But it's been going on a lot longer than the present debate, and it's bound to continue.

You and I have seen a marvelous "free" health care system develop in the last 40 years that was unheard of when I was a kid. The whole emergency medical service, with first responders among fire, police, and EMT's in advanced life support units, are the result of far-sighted people in both medicine and public safety who realized that people were dying needlessly when prompt action at critical moments could frequently save lives. "Call 9-1-1" meant absolutely nothing 50 years ago. Most ambulance services were jokingly referred to as "meat wagons." Many were actually operated by funeral homes, which no doubt conveniently helped attract the follow-up business. While the private companies of course have to charge fees and are not supported by taxes, all taxpayers pay a hefty sum for the life-saving service provided by highly skilled fire fighters and police officers. Bottom line: to say that we do not already have "free"

health care is quite inaccurate. Often enough, at the most critical moments of an incident or accident, a very high degree of emergency medical care will in fact be provided to anyone, rich or poor, without their ever receiving a bill. Those who pay taxes actually buy that service for all of us. We should be grateful beyond words for a service that was not the product of any congressional committee, but originated with those who were genuinely concerned about public health and safety and did something about it. We are forever in their debt. God bless you!

Professional Victimhood. The scholarly article, “Microaggression and Moral Cultures,” was written by sociologists Bradley Campbell and Jason Manning, professors at Cal State Los Angeles and The University of West Virginia, respectively. Published in *The Journal of Comparative Sociology*, the 2014 article gained traction a few months ago after NYU professor Jonathan Haidt covered it in his blog, *The Righteous Mind*.

Haidt co-authored a cover story for *The Atlantic* which argued that college students’ increasing demands for protection from words and ideas they don’t like is disastrous for their education and mental health. As for the sociologists’ analysis, Haidt stated on his blog regarding their article that “it is the very presence of such administrative bodies, within a culture that is highly egalitarian and diverse (i.e., many college campuses) that gives rise to intense efforts to identify oneself as a fragile and aggrieved victim.”

Campbell and Manning write that victimhood has actually become a virtue in America’s shifting culture (no wonder, when most other virtues are scorned!). “A culture of victimhood is one characterized by concern with status and sensitivity to slight, combined with a heavy reliance on third parties. People are intolerant of insults, even if unintentional, and react by bringing them to the attention of authorities or to the public at large,” they stated. “Domination is the main form of deviance, and victimization a way of attracting sympathy, so rather than emphasize either their strength or inner worth, the aggrieved emphasize their oppression and social marginalization.”

Moreover, these victims seek to control their perceived adversaries through “third-parties,” such as campus bureaucrats and diversity officers, instead of solving disputes themselves, the scholars stated. “The last few decades have seen the continued growth of legal and administrative authority, including growth in the size and scope of university administrations and in the salaries of top administrators and the creation of specialized agencies of social control, such as offices whose sole purpose is to increase ‘social justice’ by combating racial, ethnic, or other intercollective offenses,” Campbell and Manning wrote.

It seems to me that for the Christian believer, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is the perfect antidote to any temptation to engage in perpetual victimhood. Whatever our burdens and trials, the “slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,” they pale in comparison to what God demonstrates he is willing to do for us. In becoming flesh, Christ shows us that he is with us as a com-passionate (“fellow-sufferer”) com-panion (“fellow breaker of bread,” as in the Eucharist) and support in all of our sufferings, individual, relational, physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. As Christ destroyed death itself by his death, his actively becoming the perfect Victim for sin puts our victimhood to death. We don’t have to hold on to any of it. And it invites us to participate in it in a very redemptive way. When we suffer, we share in the sufferings of Christ himself, in accord with

Colossians 1:24: "I make up in my own body what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ." So the next time you're feeling like a victim of circumstances or of anything or anyone else, thank Jesus for being the Divine Victim. Then imitate him, focus on others rather than on yourself, and get on with your life. He'll be right there in it with you. God bless you!

Fr. Den

Thought for the week: Hell is populated only by volunteers.

