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**PRAY WITH ME**

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Compassionate God,  
your love for us and your world  
surpasses anything we can imagine.  
You have created each of us and destined  
us to live forever, body and soul.  
During this Easter Season, raise us  
up to greater love for our bodies and  
the bodies of those we serve.  
As we help extend your loving touch in  
this world so broken and loved by you,  
help all to experience the depths  
of your passionate embrace.  
In your precious and life-giving  
name we pray.

**AMEN.**



**EASTER**



**The angel said to the women in reply,  
“Do not be afraid!  
I know that you are seeking  
Jesus the crucified.  
He is not here, for he has been  
raised just as he said.  
Come and see the place where he lay.  
Then go quickly and tell his disciples,  
‘He has been raised from the dead,  
and he is going before you to Galilee;  
there you will see him.’”**

MATTHEW 28:5-7



## Every life is a sacred gift, every person a unity of body, mind and spirit.

This great message of Easter, the affirmation that both our bodies and our souls have eternal, inestimable value, is a cherished belief of Catholic health care. The Gospel writers take great pains to depict the attention given to Jesus' body by his mother and female disciples following his death. This stands in such contrast to the cruelties inflicted upon Jesus leading to his death.

Our bodies are hugely important to God. Jesus' whole earthly life witnesses to the fundamental goodness of creation. And the goodness of the body as a part of God's creation is given highest expression, is lifted up and acclaimed in Jesus' resurrection from the dead. His bodily resurrection defies and denies the finality of death. In Jesus' resurrection, God chose to lift up and give eternal value to the whole created order. In Christ, God utters the divine exclamation once again over all creation, as at the beginning of the scriptures, "It is good!" The transformation of each of us and the whole of the physical universe into the everlasting garden of right relationships has begun (see Romans 8:19-20).

The scriptures proclaimed during the 50 days of the Easter Season invite us to affirm the resurrection of Jesus as prelude to and promise of our own resurrection — body and soul. We are invited to experience the post-resurrection appearances as did the disciples, encounters with the Lord whose risen body still bore the deep woundedness of the world in the scars of his passion. This astounding affirmation of the goodness of our broken and imperfect bodies is so needed in our world today. To the sick and suffering; the survivors of abuse; those at odds with the size, shape and other aspects of their body; to a world obsessed with an image of the perfect body, the resurrection of Jesus proclaims that it all belongs. Our body, like our soul, will be raised up in all its brokenness along with all of this longing, wounded world.

The truth is that we are knit together as body and soul. In God's design they are inseparable and have eternal value. Our bodies should be loved in the same measure that we love our souls. That love expresses itself in caring for our bodies, loving them passionately and properly, as God does.

At its best, Catholic health care serves and honors this deep connection. When we tend to the bodies of those who come to us in need, we relieve their souls. When we care for their souls, we aid the healing of their bodies. What we separate out as clinical and pastoral are a continuum of care for the whole person we touch through our unique ministry of faith-based compassion.

If we serve with this vision and conviction, we help recreate God's Garden of health and wholeness that we set out to rediscover during our Lenten retreat. And along the way we will experience the mystery of resurrection for ourselves and all those whom God holds so dear.

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### FOR REFLECTION

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*"May the God of peace make you perfectly holy,  
and may you entirely, spirit, soul, and body,  
be preserved blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.  
The one who calls you is faithful, and he will also accomplish it."*

(1 Thessalonians 5:23-24)

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- ◇ Do you truly love and give thanks for your own body?
- ◇ How will you commit to greater love for and commitment to the bodily needs of others in your family, workplace and community?
- ◇ Where do you see the need for more holistic and compassionate care in your immediate health care setting — both for co-workers and for those they serve?