

Cover Maine Now! Coalition
Remarks of Fr. Richard Senghas
March 21, 2013

Hello, my name is Fr. Richard Senghas. I am a priest of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland. My wife was a practicing physician, and I am also an M.D., and practiced orthopedic surgery for more than thirty years. After she died, I entered the seminary and was ordained a priest in 1998. I speak to you as a priest and as a physician.

We all are created in God's image. We all—each of us--possess a basic human dignity. Catholic tradition affirms that health care is a basic right flowing from this sanctity and dignity of human life. Millions of Americans continue to go without coverage for health care. More than 48 million people do not have health insurance.

For low-income people, high premiums and out of pocket expenses can keep them from obtaining coverage or seeing a doctor when they should. It was common for me as a physician to see patients who waited too long to come for medical care, and even delayed bringing their children until they were desperately ill. They were terrified at how much medical care would cost.

Catholic teaching is that health care is a basic right, and there should be adequate and affordable health care for all, for *all*. Far too many hard-working Maine people go without access to quality affordable health care and as a result suffer unnecessarily. Maine has a truly once in a lifetime opportunity to answer this unmet need for 69,500 Mainers and to accept the federal funding which is available under the Affordable Care Act. These 69,500 people are our neighbors, our friends, our fellow Americans. Affordable and accessible health care for them is a good thing morally, ethically, medically, and fiscally. That is why the Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland has joined this coalition to expand access to healthcare to 69,500 Mainers.

To quote Pope Benedict XVI in his Encyclical, *God is Love*: "Politics is more than a mere mechanism for defining the rules of public life: its origin and its goal are found in justice, which by its very nature has to do with ethics. The State must inevitably face the question of how justice can be achieved here and now." (# 28)

We are asking for that justice, here and now.