Columns
Horizons
Spirituality



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September 20, 2024

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I've been on an intensive healing journey over the past two years. It started mostly against my will, when my community's leadership team saw the hurt I was living in and offered what became a lifeline — a break from the demands of daily ministry and the opportunity to take part in a program to help me heal. This was just the beginning of ongoing and lifelong work.

My healing work has enabled me to show up in new, messy and more authentic ways in relationships. It's caused chaos as I've shifted the ways I show up in the world and brought stability as I've settled into new, more authentic relationships. I certainly haven't fixed everything, but I have increased my capacity to sit with the discomfort, to feel the emotions I have shoved down and ignored most of my life because I didn't know how to deal with them.

My healing work has also taken a lot of time. For the first year after I returned, I participated in my primary ministry only four days a week so that I had the space to continue my personal work. If I'm honest, most weeks it still didn't feel like I had enough time to do the work I wanted to do — which included embracing rest and play as part of who I was created to be, made in the image and likeness of the Divine Creator to engage in my creative abilities. Having that freedom while most people around me remained stuck in a 5-day workweek had me asking questions about how we make healing possible in this world, how we create a world where each and every person has the opportunity to center our divine createdness and our deep human dignity.



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Embodiment facilitator, political organizer, and therapist Prentis Hemphill writes in their new book *What It Takes to Heal: How Transforming Ourselves Can Change the World*:

> I don't think healing begins where we think it does, in our doing something. I believe it begins in another realm altogether, the realm of dreams and imagination. A realm that I might also call spirit. A place of potential, where possibilities reside, where we retrieve, through prayer or in dreams, visions for ourselves and for the world that make us more whole. And with our visions in place, we can realize them through what follows, our commitment and the steps we take toward them."

Over the last decade, our nation has been on a journey that is asking us in a particular way to decide what kind of world we want to live in — what our vision for our world and our lives is. We've seen repeated police killings, particularly of Black

people, and the resulting uprising of people proclaiming a vision that *Black lives matter*. This movement also raised long-ignored questions about systemic injustices and how policies have deemed some people more valuable and worthy just because of the color of their skin.

We dealt with a global pandemic that has, to-date, killed over 7 million people directly, disproportionately Black and brown people. It also disrupted our everyday lives, cutting us off from our ability to connect with each other, and our economic lives, sparking price increases. Prices are still excessive, enriching massive corporations and executives while leaving so many of us struggling to meet our daily needs — a massive redistribution of wealth toward the already ultra wealthy.

We've dealt with pandemic-necessitated changes to the voting process that some have used to challenge the security of our elections and make it harder for many people to access their right to participate in a free and fair democratic process.

In the face of these national questions and issues, long-held competing visions for our society have clashed deeply and in painful ways across our society and often within our own families.

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Catholic social teaching offers a vision of a world where everyone thrives, whether they're Black, brown, or white — no matter their zip code or where they were born. This vision, born of prayer and dreams, is the foundation from which we can live our commitment to building this world we envision. Catholic social teaching says society has duties to the individual and the individual has duties to the society, while our hyper-capitalist economic system ignores society's duty to the individual unless the individual is already wealthy and powerful.

We, the people, however, want to *heal*. Most of us want to build community, to know our neighbors, and to have access to the tools, time, and space that it takes to be our best selves and engage in the full range of what it means to be human — creative, connected to each other, and embodied. For this to happen, we have to pause and rest long enough to reenvision our political and economic structures. And then we have to work to ensure workers have time to be present to their families and in their neighborhoods. We have to make sure people have high-quality,

affordable, accessible health care, food and housing. We have to make this available to everyone because *nobody can thrive alone*.

Recently, we've heard a lot about another vision, one that would further dismantle our ability to care for ourselves and each other. The Heritage Foundation's vision, as published in their Project 2025 "Mandate for Leadership," vastly contrasts with the vision found in Catholic social teaching.

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Project 2025 tells us to get in line, to work harder, to use our labor to enrich the billionaires or risk starving. Their vision of society guts workplace protections, including protections against child labor, and eliminates overtime pay. It eliminates Head Start, blocking educational equity for low-income families, and denies federal student loans to students in *half* of all U.S. states. All the while, it gives even more tax benefits to the wealthiest among us while raising taxes for most of us, increases our costs on prescription drugs, and limits access to financial assistance in accessing health care, food and housing. The few wealthy power brokers in our society want to keep the rest of us busy and exhausted so they can continue to use their power to further enrich themselves.

As Network's "Project 2025 in Contrast with Catholic Social Justice: A Future for Few/A Future for All" states, "Project 2025's policies are designed to privilege a small, white, wealthy ruling class and their corporate interests, while burdening everyone else. The result would be a society in which millions of us, our families, and our communities would face economic hardship, barriers to democratic participation, a lack of legal protections from discrimination and violence, the weaponization of the legal system to quash political dissent, and the dismantling of our constitutional freedoms."

Catholic social teaching presents a direct critique of that model. In *Rerum Novarum*, Pope Leo XIII says, "Daily labor, therefore, should be so regulated as not to be protracted over longer hours than strength admits." In other words, the body matters. Care for human bodies and limits is key to honoring human dignity and key to healing ourselves and our society.

More recently, the Nap Ministry, founded in 2016 by Tricia Hersey, has been on a mission to resist a world that wants to push us beyond our limits. Hersey spreads the

good news of the "liberating power of naps" and the importance in the statement "rest is resistance." Her ministry is to remind us of the importance of caring for our bodies.

In February, she wrote, "I am only able to have a life-giving rest practice because I have boundaries that center my divinity. I don't attach my worth to my accomplishments, to-do list or career." And neither does God. Human dignity means *innate, unearned* dignity. We do nothing to earn our dignity. We do nothing to lose our dignity.

"In the beginning," God created the world. And then God rested. God commanded us to do the same — to rest. May we build a world where all people — Black, brown, white, rich or poor — have the ability to honor the image of God in them by working to create a beautiful world for all *and* by resting. In this way, we can heal from a world that pushes us beyond our God-given limits and honor our true dignity in our work and in our rest.