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## *Time for a Check-Up with Your Priest*

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*  
by the Very Reverend Sam G. Candler**

*(an excerpt from my sermon on the First Sunday of Lent)*

Have no fear. On this First Sunday of Lent, I will not add my own feeble thoughts on the political issues of health care. But I do want to ask two particular questions about health care this morning. How many of you actually have a doctor, a primary physician, who knows something about you? And the second question is this: if you do have a doctor, when was the last time you visited him or her?

, Today, we have just begun the season of Lent. Four days ago, Ash Wednesday, many of you heard the priest say, "I invite you to the observance of a Holy Lent, by self-examination." Today, I want to make the same case for priests that my friend made for doctors. Today, I ask you: Do you have a priest? If so, when was the last time you checked in with him or her?

, My Lenten invitation is for you to check in with a priest some time in the next forty days. If you do not have a priest who knows you, find one you would like to know. Check in, even if only for a few minutes, or for longer. Make a telephone call. Send an e-mail. Make an appointment. Use Lent to check in with your priest like you would check in with a physician. Some people might require only a few minutes. Others will require more.

To every new parishioner who enters the Cathedral, I say a similar thing; and I try to say it to everyone from time to time: Make sure that at least one of the canons of the Cathedral knows who you are! The Cathedral of St. Philip has many priests, and many different sorts of priests. Our Canon for Music functions as a pastoral leader, too. Some of us are not very cool, and some of us are very cool! Make sure that at least one of the canons of the Cathedral knows who you are! It is as simple as that. All of us need occasions for examination. All of us could use a few tests.

Ah, but we don't like tests, do we? We grew up not liking tests in school. Then, we had to visit the doctor's offices, and their medical tests were quite uncomfortable, and sometimes painful. Now, as adults, we find some of our medical tests to be even more uncomfortable and intrusive. But those tests can save us.

, the word for "tempt" is much the same as the word for "test." In fact, in Greek, it is the very same word. The beginning of the story of Jesus in the wilderness, in English, says that Jesus "was tempted by the devil" (Luke 4:2); and the end of the story, in English, says that "the devil had finished every test" (Luke 4:13). But, in both cases, the word for "tempt" and the word for "test," are the same word (peirasmos).

When Jesus submitted to his own tests, when he faced the temptations of the devil, he was actually growing healthier in faith. For us, physically, the tests in our lives are uncomfortable. The tests in our lives can be just as uncomfortable as the temptations. But they also mean we are growing in spiritual health.

So it is that a priest, or some other spiritual director, may ask you hard questions, uncomfortable questions. Her conversation with you might even seem intrusive; those conversations might reveal places where you are vulnerable. They are like doctor's examinations, and we pray that they are just as fruitful.

, Lent begins, then, with our commitment to spiritual examination and health. Do you have a person where you can check in? Do you have a priest? Do you have someone committed to your spiritual health and salvation? Do you have a doctor? Someone in charge of the cure of souls?

I hope so. Find one. I invite you, in the name of the Church, to the observance of a holy Lent.

[Read the entire sermon](#)

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