

The healing ministry of Jesus

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heals the physical infirmity and he forgives sin. In this theologians have seen the total approach in the ministry of Jesus: He addresses himself to everything that is part of being human.

Such explanations are of great value. They are a way of understanding our common life. But beyond all the explanations, there is the simple, human reality of people in need. Jesus responds to these people.

The church is aware of the fundamental needs unmet in the lives of so many of the world's people. We look at human basics like food, shelter, health care, education and the need for security and peace.

What does the work of Jesus mean for us on a very human level? it is asked. And how have Christ and his church related to these human needs in the past?

What we find is a consistent tradition of human compassion.

From the well-off Romans opening their doors to the unwashed and hungry barbarian

families camped in misery on the outskirts of the city, to charitable groups assisting refugees and displaced persons in Europe after the Second World War, to the American parishes of recent years sponsoring refugee families from Southeast Asia, there has been a history of compassion.

These were people in need. That was important.

Today we live in a world of big issues. Important people do important things for important reasons. But to judge by the way Jesus healed people, perhaps we're becoming too important.

The most notable moments in the life of the church as healer may well have come about because ordinary kindness was shown to ordinary people.

It was shown because someone felt sorry for someone else. Perhaps that may prove to be the best of reasons.

(Father O'Rourke is on the staff of the Family Life Office in the Diocese of Oakland, Calif.)

Medical arts in Jesus' time

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Jesus healed because he cared, because he loved.

If Jesus was renowned as a teacher, he was just as widely acclaimed as a healer. People came to him from far and wide to avail themselves of his extraordinary power, as we read in Mark's Gospel:

"A great crowd followed him from Galilee, and an equally

(Mark 3:7-10).

The scripture accounts reflect the belief of their writers in the divine sonship of Jesus. Thus the healing passages have it as one purpose to teach others who Jesus is and what he means for them. But even with that in mind, there can be no doubt that Jesus possessed a remarkable healing power.

No matter how severe or apparently hopeless the disease, Jesus cured it. Usually he demanded an expression of faith on the part of one seeking a cure, of faith in him as the agent of God's power.

Repeatedly, after performing a cure, Jesus remarked that the person had been saved by faith. Among other things, Jesus realized that a cure is almost impossible if the patient lacks confidence in the physician.

Jesus' mastery over physical ills was part of his victory over all evil, a victory which will be complete only when his Father's kingdom is definitively established at the end of time.

(Father Castelot teaches at St. John's Seminary, Plymouth, Mich.)

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great multitude came to him from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, Transjordan and the neighborhood of Tyre and Sidon, because they had heard what he had done...Because he had cured many, all who had afflictions kept pushing toward him to touch him"

FOOD...

...for thought

Healing. It takes many forms. Naturally, there are physical healings of disease and broken bones. But there are other kinds of healing too.

1. Healing broken relationships. "Where the relationship means the most, the most difficult situations" are likely to arise. Then healing can become a big need,

said Father James Black, academic dean at Father Ryan High School in Nashville, Tenn.

A conflict in a family — between a parent and child, for instance — can cause pain, Father Black observed. Sometimes the people involved experience a sense of helplessness. They may even despair that a relationship can be renewed. In this case, what is needed is a "kind of healing" of attitude," Father Black said.

In a Liguori Press book titled "How to Forgive Yourself and Others," Father Eamon Tobin spoke of relationships that need healing. Whenever one person hurts another, it becomes a time of decision, he said. "In the face of hurt, the way of the world is to strike back; the way of Christ is to forgive and, if possible, to

become reconciled."

2. Healing self-centeredness. Father Black, a scripture scholar, pointed out that the biblical prophets spoke much of transformation, the need for people to "turn toward others and toward the Lord."

To heal self-centeredness, he indicated, a person must be willing to turn outward. Doing so "allows the Lord to work through us."

3. Healing anxiety. Everyone will meet up with anxiety sometime, Father Black said. It comes in many forms.

There are occasions when a person's anxiety is the "natural tension" caused by work-related problems. Or, there is the anxiety of living with sickness. In such cases, anxiety can get in the way of doing one's job or living one's life. Anxiety and its effects need to be alleviated.

Broken relationships; self-centeredness; anxiety. Each can create a need for healing.

But what else creates the need for healing? And what does it mean, in the course of everyday life, to be one who heals?

...for discussion

1. What are some of the forces that wound cities and neighborhoods? What works to heal cities and neighborhoods?

2. What wounds a family? What heals?

3. To heal a troubled relationship, it may be necessary to change one's attitude about it. Undoubtedly this kind of healing requires patience, along with courage. What else is needed if relationships are to heal?

4. Jesus took ordinary human needs seriously, Father David K. O'Rourke writes. Are there ordinary human needs close-at-hand for you that need to be taken more seriously?

5. In her article, Katharine Bird writes about Sister Angela Murdough and her work in birthing centers in Texas' Rio Grande Valley. Do you think Sister Murdough is carrying on the healing ministry of Jesus? In what ways?

SECOND HELPINGS

"Down Gospel Byways: 18 Stories of People Who Met Jesus," by Sister Mary Terese Donze, ASC. These 11 imaginative stories help the reader picture what might have happened when Jesus came into contact with people such as Simeon, Mary Magdalene, Abigail, Mary at Cana and Zacchaeus. The author writes: "I hope that these simple stories will serve as creative aids to those who base their prayer life on the Gospels." The idea for the book came out of her own musings about the people Jesus met, about "their loves, their fears, their aspirations." She adds, "I wanted to learn more about them, to find out what difference it made in their personal lives to have known and talked to and touched the living Jesus of Nazareth." (Liguori Publications, 1 Liguori Drive, Liguori, Mo. 63057. \$2.95. 80 pages.)