

HEALING: SOME BIBLICAL REFLECTIONS

By Fr. Francis Martin

Mother of God Prayer Meeting
January 20, 2002

Healing in the Old Testament

A. The Experience of Health and Sickness

- Death is the place where there is no praise of God (see Is 38:18).
- Sickness and Sin/ Repentance and Healing (Ps 38:2-6; 39:9-12)
- Restoration and Health (Is 33:24)
- Medical means of healing: allusions to herbs etc. (2Kgs 20:7; Wis 7:20; Sir 38:15)
- Healing through prayer (2Kgs 4:8-37; 5:1-19)

B. Symbolic Understanding of Sickness and Healing

- Only God can heal the effects of the people's infidelity (Hos 5:13; 7:1; Is 1:5-7)
- Salvation as healing (Hos 11:3; Ex 15:27; also Hos 14:5; Jer 17:14)

Healing in the New Testament

1. The Ministry of Jesus

- Characteristic of his public life (Mt 11:4-6/Lk 7:22-23; see Is 35:5-6; 61:1)
- His association with the poor and down hearted (Mt 9:12-13; Lk 15:1-2)
- The signs of the Kingdom (Lk 4:17-21; 11:20; Mt 12:28)
- Freeing people from evil and evil spirits (Lk 13:16; see Mt 15:22-28 ["demon-possessed" described as "healed"]; 8:17)
- Relation between healing and teaching: compare Mt 14:14/Mk 6:34; Lk 9:11; Mt 19:2/Mk 10:1 etc.

2. The Healing Ministry of the Church

- Commissioned by Jesus (Mt 10:1-8; Mk 6:7-12; Lk 9:1-6)
- In the name of Jesus (Act 4:12)
- Witness to the resurrection (Act 4:33)
- Part of preaching the Gospel (Act 4:4,31; 5:14-15; 9:35-42; 2Cor 12:12)

The Gift of Healing

1. In the Early Community

- A Charismatic Gift (1Cor 12:9,28,30)
- Anointing as an extension of the power of the resurrection (see Eph 1:19-20; Jas 5:13-16)
- Sickness and misconduct (1Cor 11:30)
- Healing effected by: preaching, those commissioned to preach the Gospel, the ministry of the elders, the gift of healing.

2. Healing in the Modern Church

- The healing ministry throughout the history of the Church
- God's answer to prayer

- Healing through: Christian medical practice, alleviating the conditions that cause disease (poverty, war, fear, immorality), prayer and ministry, the gift of healing

3. The Healing of Memories

- Link between interior wound and physical and psychological illness
- The seven basic impulses and "trauma driven vices"
- Virtue and a balanced emotional life (apatheia)
- The contribution of the psychological sciences
- The role of a word of knowledge
- The need for the integration of faith and reason

Questions

1. How do you see the relation between sickness and sin? Is sickness always a personal punishment for personal sin? Ps 38:2-6; 39:9-12; Is 33:24.
2. How is healing a revelation of God? Hos 11:3; Ex 15:26; also Hos 14:4; Jer 17:14
3. Can you think of three reasons why healing was such an important part of Jesus's activity?
Mt 11:4-6/Lk 7:22-23; see Is 35:5-6; 61:1
Lk 4:17-21; 11:20; Mt 12:28
Mt 9:12-13; Lk 15:1-2
4. What other ways of healing does the Lord provide besides the charismatic gift of healing?
5. Can you think of occasions in your life when you experienced the healing power of the Lord? What effect did this have on the whole of your life?
6. Why does the Book of Acts speak of healings as a manifestation of the power of the resurrection? Act 4:33; Act 4:30; 5:14-15; 9:35-42; 2 Cor 12:12
7. What is the role of memory, both positive and negative in our lives? How does the healing power of the Lord affect our memories?