



July 1, 2012 The Thirteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time

"God did not make death, nor does he rejoice in the destruction of the living."—Wisdom 1:13

Dear Friends;

In the ancient Mediterranean world there were two kinds of healers. There were the professional physicians and there were folk healers. For the most part only the rich had access to the professional physicians. The poor had to rely on folk healers.

Modern Medicine is said to have originated with the Greek physician, Hippocrates of Kos who lived in the years 460-370 before Christ. The Hippocratic Oath (which physicians still take today) was a reflection of the strict ethical code by which professional physicians of the Hippocratic School practiced their healing art. Some of the ancient Greek physicians were able to perform sophisticated procedures. There are accounts of successful surgeries on the brain and eyes.

Professional physicians of the ancient world were paid by their patient clients. They also were hesitant about the patients they treated (like our contemporary health insurers). This was because if the patient died they could be put to death. So they often preferred to discuss illness. Many were philosopher-physicians who dispensed advice for a fee.

The ancient Hebrews considered God to be the chief healer. So Jews had mixed feelings toward professional physicians. Folk healers were more available to the average person—the poor. These healers were willing to touch people and even risk failed treatments.

The Gospel of Mark presents Jesus as someone in whom the Spirit of God is strong and at work. He is a prophet who calms storms and a healer from whom the power of God flows. We cannot know whether Jesus cured disease. Curing is about the biological reversal of illness. Illness in Jesus' culture is seen to be the result of evil spirits—not biological. We do know that Jesus healed. Healing is the restoration of meaning to people's lives no matter their condition. Curing is rare but healing can happen all the time when a person regains meaning and their place in the family and community.

The hemorrhaging woman, in today's passage from the Gospel of Mark, is healed when she touches Jesus. Her faith in him and his love restore her. She is not just another patient; she is a child of God. The daughter of Jairus is also healed. She is restored to her place in the family. Jesus commands that she should eat something with her family. Meals are signs of relationship.

The woman with the hemorrhage and the little girl both eventually died. But this does not mean that Jesus failed or postponed the inevitable. Jesus touched them and revealed God's plan. God desires that we share life with him forever. In Jesus God walks with us even in our suffering and assures us that our life has meaning beyond death.

And so touched we must in turn make sure that others know the healing power of God. The touch of Jesus is not just for those who can pay for it. His touch is for all. This is why from ancient times the Church has maintained places of healing—hospitals and clinics. There are accounts in the early Church of Christian physicians who would not charge their patients in imitation of Jesus. God intends for us to care for the health of all. It is a Christian duty. It is the duty of a Christian society.

As our country debates the pros and cons of how to administer health care, we should remind ourselves of the example of Jesus who was willing to heal without cost. I would like to conclude with a quote from the **Catechism of the Catholic Church**:

Life and physical health are precious gifts entrusted to us by God. We must take responsible care of them, taking into account the needs of others and the common good. Concern for the health of its citizens requires that society help in the attainment of living-conditions that allow them to grow and reach maturity: food and clothing, housing, health care, basic education, employment and social assistance. # 2288.

Like Jesus let us touch others and bring them healing. Let us work for a society where all have access to health and wholeness.

Peace,

Fr. Ron

Have a happy Independence Day celebration!