

WHY SACRAMENTAL HEALING?

Various Forms of Healing

In our diverse society, in addition to orthodox medicine, a comparably diverse array of healing techniques presses for attention. We have various forms of faith healing, including absent healing – earnest invocation of divine intervention on behalf of named sufferers – as well as all manner of alternative therapies – homeopathy, osteopathy, naturopathy, aromatherapy, acupuncture and therapeutic touch, to mention just a few. An in the hands of competent and intuitive therapists, these, at least, are potent aids. Why, then, draw attention to yet another approach to the healing process?

Often these therapies focus wholly or chiefly upon the physical body, although many practitioners do endeavour to take into account the whole person. All depend upon specialised knowledge; some also rely upon an emergent capacity to diagnose which goes beyond evident physical symptoms to an intuitive grasp of underlying causes, very often not physical at all. In these many ways dedicated and sometimes gifted practitioners lighten the loads of afflicted persons, at times producing complete and lasting cures. But in the absence of talent bordering upon a spiritual gift, outcomes, while helpful, may be rather minimal. Few would question the generalisation that healers and alternative therapists vary enormously in capacity.

A Rationale for Sacramental Healing

Since the second edition of its liturgy (1924), the Liberal Catholic Church has made available a healing service which does not depend upon any charismatic or singular healing talent, but rather upon the powers bestowed at ordination. The power to achieve physical cures directly is not one of the priests' ordination gifts, but the power to invoke and pour out Christ's blessing upon those in need, in an especially potent way, most certainly is. Moreover, if we accept that most, or at least very many serious forms of illness have arisen from disturbed feeling and thought patterns, it will be appreciated that a flood of blessing which sweeps away, or greatly lessens such disturbances, will bring the individual into a more harmonious state. Thus harmonised he or she is restored to a condition of sensitivity to the life of the deeper self, the real self, the soul or reincarnating individuality, who often functions through body, feelings and mind only with the greatest difficulty. Whenever the vagrant and changeable outward self, which we mistakenly take to be ourselves, is realigned with the real self – which most of us sense only very dimly – a descent of spiritualising power is likely to take place, with beneficial results right down to the physical body. The simultaneous cleansing of the vehicles of thought and feeling may be even more helpful than the easing of bodily discomfort, as the individual will in this way be assisted to live more wisely, and so avoid the actions – and tendencies of thought and feeling – which contribute to interior disorder and illness.

The Healing Service

The healing service is structured very simply. As this work is done in the name of the Holy Trinity, the invocation is intoned: "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost". Immediately the celebrant goes on to invoke the assistance of a healing angel. One of the Seers to describe the inner workings of our services has told us that, in response, not one, but a line of angelic presences appear, reaching from the sanctuary of the church deep into the subtler realms, presumably having

descended at the behest of the Archangel Raphael, head of the hosts of angels of healing.

A brief Confiteor follows, the people affirming that “our hearts are ever restless till they find their rest in Thee”, turning to brief reflection upon “our manifold imperfections”, and asking for pardon for “all our shortcomings”. As the Celebrant pronounces the Absolution, we are told, “a flood of outpoured blessing ... corrects the alignments for the vehicles of consciousness and restores their broken rhythms ...”.

Prayers and hymns further prepare the people for what is to follow. These include the ‘Veni Creator’, a traditional hymn to the Holy Spirit, whose response at this stage is said to be a descent of spiritual energy which fills the consecrated church, visible to clairvoyant vision as a luminous fiery mist. Those wishing to receive the blessing individually are then invited to come forward. They kneel, a few at a time, at the communion rail.

The Confiteor and Absolution alone are highly beneficial for all present. For those who receive also the individual blessing, the effects are very powerful indeed. As the Celebrant stands before each recipient, he pronounces an exorcism. “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost” – making the sign of the cross three times over the kneeling person’s head – “I exorcise all influences of evil that thou mayest be rightly purified to receive this Sacrament of Holy Unction.” As the priest pronounces the exorcism he opens himself fully to the grace of the Lord Christ to whom ordination has linked him in a way more potent and direct than the connection all share with the Master. The effect is further to purify the recipient’s personal vehicles of thought and emotion and physical vitality, driving out or weakening even long standing disharmonies and pockets of congestion.

Pausing only briefly, the Celebrant declares, “In the name of our Lord Christ and of the holy Archangel Raphael, I anoint thee with oil that thou mayest gain refreshment, both of soul and body”, making, as he speaks, the sign of the cross on the brow, crown and throat of the recipient, and on the back of the neck, his thumb moistened with oil, earlier blessed by a bishop for use for healing purposes. Slowly, and with total concentration, the priest places both hands lightly upon the head of the person, saying quietly “Christ the Son of God, pour down His healing power upon thee”, pausing, then slowly, “and enfold thee in the light of His love”. This climactic act must not be hurried. It is said that for each one, the descent of blessing builds up slowly, reaches a peak and slowly diminishes. At the same time, the fiery power of the Holy Spirit, having become concentrated over the head of the Celebrant, pours through him to each suppliant in turn. Once those being anointed have returned to their places, all present are invited to receive Holy Communion, after which a final Benediction is pronounced. Participants are encouraged to be quietly recollected as they retire, so as to prevent their feelings of exaltation being rapidly frittered away.

Some Final Considerations

The effects of this service upon individuals vary enormously, doubtless according to their need, and their capacity to receive. There is also the question of their “Karma”, or accumulated unresolved life – sowings, to be considered, and there are very few able to interpret this. Always the service helps, always it is potent, always the

recipients are irradiated with the direct blessing of their Lord. Sometimes remarkable physical benefits ensue, but on other occasions the person declines and dies. We can only assume that he or she is being called home for a time, before returning for another encounter with life, another step nearer to final emancipation. As the former Poet Laureate John Masefield wrote in this poem, "A Creed":

"With sturdier limbs and brighter brain, the old soul takes the road again."

The healing service is open to all; church membership is not a precondition. In cases of special need an abridged form of the service can be conducted privately in a home or a hospital.

Sacramental healing is not intended to replace the work of doctors or of practitioners in the many fields now available to us. It has its own place and may be received by those in need while they pursue the medical or alternative therapies of their choice.