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From the Episcopal Advisor: Healing in Hand with the Lord

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*From the
Episcopal Advisor*



Healing in Hand with the Lord

We recall the well-known picture of the praying hands. If they are superimposed over the healing hands of a physician, they reach out with their therapeutic strength, touch and supply an energy which they have to one who needs it. No mechanical equipment can quite produce the comforting sensitive and tangible effect that streams through the veins of a physician's hands. We like to apply the words of the 11th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, "laying hands on the sick and healing them because the hand of the Lord was with them." As the delicate pressure of the violinist's fingers over strings produces a harmony of melody, so, too, the gifted physician has the power of letting his fingers reach even beyond what the eye can see. One is always impressed by Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel painting of Creation, where God extends His finger and touches men. This first-released vitality from God has continued to be a chain reaction from the beginning of time. Those who are healers, first of all need full educational knowledge as to how to treat a body and its weaknesses. This knowledge should be combined with faith to bring about the restoration of health.

Luke, the physician-evangelist details so beautifully in his gospel how the man named Jairus appealed to Jesus. "My little daughter is critically ill," he said. "Please come and lay your hands on her that she may get well and live." In that same gospel, Luke relates how a

woman had been afflicted with a hemorrhage for 12 years. She had received treatment at the hands of doctors of every sort and exhausted her savings in the process. Yet, she got no relief. On the contrary, she only grew worse. She had heard about Jesus and came up behind Him in the crowd and put her hand to His cloak. If I just touch his clothing, she thought, I shall get well. Immediately her flow of blood dried up and the feeling that she was cured of her affliction ran through her whole body. Jesus was immediately conscious that healing power had gone out from Him. Wheeling about in the crowd, He began to ask, "Who touched my clothing?" His disciples said to Him, "You can see how this crowd hems you in, yet You ask who touched You?" Despite this, Jesus kept looking around to see the woman who had done it. Fearful, and beginning to tremble now as she realized what had happened, the woman came and fell in front of Him and told Him the whole truth. He said, "Daughter, it is your faith that has cured you. Go in peace and be free of this illness."

Medicine or surgery in themselves do not have the complete answer. It is the reciprocity of the faith both in the healer and the one to be healed, together with the God Who made the body and grants this renewal of physical strength. St. Paul's second letter to the Corinthians refers to us having God's light shining through our hearts, a great treasure, but in an earthen vessel. He refers to the body as belonging to the Lord. If so, then this Lord does not want to lose His possession but enjoy its service to Him. To retain the use of a body which is a temple of the Holy Spirit, we can say that He illuminates the mind of the physician and gives him skillful guidance in bringing that body back to the service of the Lord.

Why is God so desirous that this temple which Paul says is a mere earthen vessel be preserved for longer use? Namely, as Paul writes, so that "my life be a faithful imitation of the life and virtues of Jesus Christ. That the life of Jesus may be made manifest in our mortal flesh." In other words, God is glorified even by a minimal act of virtue that brings splendor to Him from His creature. Man passing through the process of transformation from a sinner to a saint can only do so through the instrumentality of his body. It is a period of testing that leads to perfection. This imitation of Christ throughout our life is outlined to us through that great mystery of the Incarnation, God taking the flesh of man so that man can take on the shadow of the divinity prepared for Him, or, as we say in the Eucharistic Prayer at Mass, that Jesus shares our humanity so that we may share His divinity. In sharing our humanity, He shared the pain of the body suffering, scourging, bleeding, and all the weaknesses to which the body is subject except sin. Herein lies the bridge between the valley of tears and the rainbow of heaven. There is no other way to cross over except through this physical test before we can reach the glorified body which Jesus will raise up as He Himself was raised.

When we think of the physician's God-given skill of touch and movement, we realize how much the Catholic, through the grace he receives from God, can appreciate the privilege of being, as St. Paul writes, "a co-worker with Christ."

In today's world of evil living, the physician is to be a harbinger of goodness in such a way that when he approaches a patient he can quickly be identified as the apostle Peter was identified in the midst of the enemies of Christ. It occurred when the woman spoke up and said, "You were with Christ; your speech reveals you." There is something about the radiance of a saintly physician that sends a message to the patient that he, too, was and is with Christ. His touch is not an ordinary one; it is extraordinary. The apostles after Pentecost were not just ordinary creatures or just some of the Galileans, as the Acts of the Apostles relate; they were fortified and healed with the help that the Holy Spirit supplied.

Since Jesus definitely declared that it is faith which restored health and since the apostles themselves used the same reference, the good physician who attends Mass and collects into his spiritual computer all the blessings that Mass and Holy Communion provide, the physician who finds time to finger a rosary and meditate on the creative power from the conception of life mentioned at the Annunciation to the termination of life at the Crucifixion, need never fear lacking help from heaven to do his work on earth.

— Archbishop Nicholas T. Elko, D.D.

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