

The Health – Faith Connection is a series of catechetical articles for the purpose of exploring healing in the Catholic faith and preparation for the healing sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. It is presented to the faithful of OLPH Church in Clovis as well as the Diocese of Fresno by Sally Flores, RN, FCN of Raphael Health Ministry and a candidate for a Master of Arts in pastoral ministries from Holy Names University.

Wholeness and Hope for

Our healing journey



The previous “Health-Faith Connection” articles explored true health in God’s healing of illness and suffering in our human existence; sickness; and the value of forgiveness. These health concepts call us to a conversion of the heart and they inspire a new life of faith in our journey toward healing and wholeness. In understanding the faith and health connection and finding meaning for illness and suffering through the suffering death and resurrection of Christ, we can continue in this life to seek wholeness in a hopeful vision of eternal joy.

WHOLENESS

Wholeness is pursued through mending the brokenness that separates us from God. It involves healing the whole person -- body, mind and spirit -- in relationship with self, others and God. In the Old Testament, the word “shalom” best described health. “Shalom” was described when there was a balance with all things:

- It incorporates peace, prosperity, rest, safety, security, justice, happiness, health welfare and wholeness” (Chase-Ziolek, 2005, p. 18).
- To live in peace and to be healthy, one must live in harmony.

Health reflected in wholeness is a process rather than a state to be achieved. The search for wholeness is a lifelong journey. To be whole is to be in relationship with God and others; therefore, healing includes restoring relationships. Faith community nursing complements the healing journey in its defined scope of practice: “Faith community nursing is the specialized practice of professional nursing that focuses on the intentional care of the spirit as part of the process of promoting holistic

health and preventing or minimizing illness in a faith community” (American Nurses Association, 2005, p. 1).

Jesus’ healing mission exemplifies this return to spiritual wholeness for one’s salvation and physical well-being. The sick person, whose illness alienated him or her from society, was healed of sickness and sin because of faith in Jesus Christ. The person was healed and could return as a contributing member of society, accepted as whole in body, mind and spirit. Jesus offered healing and wholeness to those who accepted the kingdom of God -- a place of “shalom” where all are welcome.

Prayer for healing

O God, who is the only source of health and healing, the spirit of calm and the central peace of this universe, grant to me such a consciousness of your indwelling and surrounding presence that I may permit you to give me health, strength and peace, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



HOPE – is a very curious thing. Where does it come from? How do we build hope and hold on to it through tough times? Where do we learn to hope and how do we foster a hope filled with possibilities?

Hope is a basic human virtue and if life is to be sustained, hope must remain.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines hope as the “theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ’s promises and relying not on our own strength but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit” (USCC, 1994, para.1817). We are all on a journey. “Journey implies being in motion toward a destination...the destination must be imagined in the future” (Lester, n.d., p. 61). The meaning of our journey must be imagined in a future story and hope is the energy for this journey. Hope pulls us toward the future as we strive for meaning and purpose. Hope is innate in the young, who quite naturally imagine new possibilities. According to Erickson, developmentalist, hope develops from loving and trusting relationships that communicate “an all-enveloping world image tying past, present and

future into a convincing pattern of providence” (Lester, n.d., p. 65).

Hope believes in a future full of possibilities and sees it as a blessing. Hope calls for faith in a loving God who is trustworthy and whom we believe will keep his promises. It is God who calls us to a future of abundant life and eternal joy.

- Hope helps us find our strength and courage to endure our sufferings by believing in the possibilities of a future we cannot yet see.
- People with hope are always growing, allowing themselves to be changed and transformed into something new.
- Imagining a future with the fulfillment of God’s promises is basic to maintaining hope.

Meaningful hope is communicated and passed to generations through sacred stories. The apostles and followers of Christ expressed stories that have lasted throughout time -- stories of hope in God’s love and salvation for us all. Christian hope is rooted in Jesus Christ, the visible expression of God’s faithfulness to our relationship and who gives us reason to hope for the “notyetness” of our future (Lester, n.d.).

“For surely I know the plans I have for you...plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope” (Jer. 29:11).

We hope in the small concrete things of our daily lives because of, not instead of, the ultimate hope in God’s final fulfillment of promise. Our ultimate belief in a “future with hope” transforms even tragedy, illness, suffering and death in the present moment. Exercising our faith and imagining hope with a vision of Christ in our future extends hope into our world. Our hopeful story then prompts compassion and action among us and toward those who are suffering and lost on their journey.

Tend to your hope. Consider the following...

- Take time to reflect on your life as a journey that moves you into new experiences and new understandings. What have you learned about hope?

- What vision of the future do you have that leads you to God as your ultimate promise for supporting real hope?

Inspire hope in others

- Hope involves listening to the story that reveals God’s presence in our lives.
- Hope helps us to recognize the sacredness in each other and to share the journey.
- Hope reminds us that we are not alone. God is always with us, strengthening us on our journey through the grace of the Holy Spirit.



Our Christian vision gives us ultimate hope in God’s power to heal, restore wholeness and health, forgive sins, comfort, console the sick and suffering, and experience peace amid disease and even death. “We are not called to summon up a great act of hope, but rather to turn our attention to the one who is faithful” (Stortz, 2006, p. 4).



Raphael Health Ministry is here to guide and support you on your health journey. Office hours are Mondays and Wednesdays from 9 a.m. until noon. Phone Number: (559) 298-5443.

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