**Notes for April 28, 2022**

**“Caring for our Physical, Mental, Social and Spiritual Health”**

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Introduction

1. The Covid crisis has sharpened our concerns about our health. Dealing with Covid fatigue.
2. In everyday life we are integrated persons: who can enjoy a tasty meal and suffer from fatigue; read a good book and debunk a conspiracy theory; who can feel pride in work and feel sad about lingering prejudice; can have good friends and be involved in community services; and can attend religious services and enjoy a rich inner life.
3. The meaning of health:
4. The condition of being sound in body, mind and spirit in which a person is thriving or doing well, a state of well-being that can be disrupted by disease.
5. A resource for living well; being resilient in difficult situations, to handle stress, to develop skills to realize aspirations and maintain relationships, to recover from adverse events. This suggests we can deepen and expand this resource (health) by understanding and developing healthy habits and living a healthy life style.
6. We can speak of “holistic health” which recognizes that the various dimensions of human existence (physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual) have their own dynamics, but must work together to help an individual live a full, integrated, satisfying life. This enables us to recognize our strengths and to work on our weak points.
7. Christian spirituality derived from traditional teaching and practices invites deepening our awareness that God loves us, Christ walks with us and the Holy Spirit dwells within us. It calls for receptivity, being open to divine gifts, being mindful of divine presence. God’s grace is always available and never exhausted. It multiplies when we share it. Our soul is the center of our being. Through “one eye” it perceives the world of spirit which is infinite, transcendent. Through a “second eye,” the soul sees the material world and how it is impacted by the Spirit. It provides a perspective on the other dimensions of human existence, a way of seeing them in relation to God and our eternal destiny. It helps us see the light in the darkness, meaning in the midst of absurdity, commitment in a world of open-options, purpose in an aimless world, hope in a world on the edge of despair. Our inner awareness of the Divine presence prompts us to seek conversion in all dimensions that are physical, mental, emotional and social (cf *Spirituality Healthcare* by John Shea).
8. Physical Health
9. The Christian tradition is especially strong in celebrating the dignity and worth of the human body.
10. Book of Genesis tells us that God made human beings male and female and declared that this was very good.
11. We believe that in the fullness of time the Word was made flesh. The Son of God became a Jewish man during the reign of Herod the Great, spent most of his life doing manual labor, publicly preached the coming of the kingdom and suffered a cruel, painful death on the cross.
12. We believe in the fundamental goodness of the human body and in the resurrection of the body. We are saved as whole persons, body and soul.
13. Christianity teaches that we have a moral obligation to care for our bodies and not to abuse them.
14. Advice from the Mayo Clinic
15. Get enough sleep (7 to 8 hours), go to bed and get up at the same time each day.
16. Participate in regular physical exercise that can reduce anxiety and improve mood. Get outside.
17. Eat healthy. Have a balanced diet. Avoid loading up on junk food, refined sugar and caffeine, drink plenty of water.
18. Avoid tobacco and drugs and do not use alcohol to cope with problems. Limit screen time. Turn off devices for some time each day including at least 30 minutes before bedtime.
19. Relax and recharge, take deep breaths and stretch often, walk outside.
20. Advice from the American Psychological Association
21. Monitor your activity patterns by keeping a daily log, noting thoughts, feelings and environment (where, when and what you do).
22. Track your activity level; how much you exercise and move about during the day.
23. Eat regular meals and do not skip meals, this can slow your metabolism and promote binges.
24. Practice mindful eating by paying attention to whether you are really hungry and making eating more enjoyable.
25. Understand what you associate with eating; for example, watching TV. Break this habit by not eating while watching TV.
26. Identify your emotions that accompany snacking, overeating; for example, stress, boredom or sadness. Find another way to deal with the emotions.
27. Reinforce healthy behaviors. Build healthy habits. Strive for progress not perfection. Don’t let failure derail the whole effort; do not think in terms of being off or on a diet; find ways to reward healthy changes, develop habits which make healthy eating enjoyable and easier.
28. Vaccination
29. Vaccines stimulate the body’s own immune response to help prevent sickness from infectious diseases.
30. The smallpox vaccine, invented in 1796, eventually eradicated the disease in 1979 after it had killed an estimated 300-500 million people in the 20th century.
31. States typically require certain vaccinations (for example: polio, diphtheria, hepatitis B, measles, mumps) before children can go to public schools.
32. Vaccine Hesitancy is a broader term than anti-vaccination, which is totally opposed to all vaccines. Hesitancy has existed throughout the whole history of vaccinations and stems from multiple causes: mistrust of efficacy and science; mandates violate civil liberties; suspicion of pharmaceutical industry; fear of needles; conspiracy theories (such as vaccines cause autism); political opposition especially with Covid 19. The current debate involves two values; the government responsibility for protecting public health and the freedom of citizens to care for their own health.
33. Recent studies indicate that only about 40% of Americans are fully vaccinated with boosters against Covid while 63% of Americans received the initial shots. Some 63 million eligible Americans remain totally unvaccinated including prominent persons Robert Kennedy Jr. and Aaron Rogers.
34. In a January, 2022 address to Vatican ambassadors, Pope Francis said getting vaccinated is a “moral obligation” and an “act of love” which respects the health of people around the world. He also criticized the “politization of vaccinations and the spread of disinformation.” This moral obligation is grounded in fundamental Christian beliefs. We are all members of God’s family, responsible for the well-being of one another. Christ’s law of love calls us to care for the most vulnerable; the Holy Spirit prompts us to rise above selfish individualism and to seek the common good.
35. The spiritual dimension
36. One Perspective: The body is intrinsically worthy of respect because it is God’s handiwork and shares in our ultimate destiny with God.
37. Application: We need to develop healthy habits that avoid the extremes of making an idol out of the body and abusing it. Efforts to improve bodily health are worthwhile even if not greatly successful; caring for our body is an act of love to our families.
38. Practices: Do a Lenten penance that improves our physical health, for example, fasting and developing better eating habits.

II. Mental Health

1. Advice from the Mayo Clinic on dealing with the stress, anxiety, fear, sadness and loneliness created by the Covid pandemic.
2. Keep a regular daily routine of meals, sleep, work, bathing and exercise which gives a greater sense of being in control.
3. Limit exposure to news media which can heighten fears. Avoid social media espousing conspiracy theories. Look for reliable sources such as U.S. Centers for Disease Control.
4. Stay busy. Enjoy doing things at home such as reading a book, writing in a journal, making a craft, playing games or cooking a new meal.
5. Focus on positive thoughts, the good things in your life, past and present; make a list of things you are thankful for; maintain a sense of hope; try to accept changes as they occur; keep problems in perspective.
6. Use your moral compass or spirituality for support; draw strength and comfort from your belief system in difficult times.
7. Set priorities. Set reasonable goals each day and outline steps to achieve them; take credit for every step in the right direction, even small ones; realizing some days will be better than others.
8. The American Psychological Association advice on managing stress which is a normal part of life but when high or extreme can be harmful.
9. Understand how you experience stress: for example, how are your thoughts and behaviors different.
10. Identify your sources of stress: are they related to children, family, work, financial decisions or something else?
11. Learn your stress signals: hard time concentrating or making decisions; feeling angry, irritable, out of control; headaches, muscle tension or lack of energy.
12. Identify destructive coping: smoking, drinking alcohol, eating too much or too little.
13. Find healthy ways to cope: meditation, exercise, talking things out; focus on changing one bad behavior at a time.
14. Take care of yourself: eat right; get enough sleep; drink plenty of water; engage in regular physical activity (take a walk, go to the gym, play a sport); no matter how hectic life is make time for yourself (vacation, read a good book, listen to music).
15. Reach out for support: talk to a friend or family member, seek professional help.
16. Harvard Health Blog article published May 26, 2020: “Six simple steps to keep your mind sharp at any age.”
17. Keep learning. Develop the habit of being mentally active. Pursue a hobby, learn a new skill, mentor a student.
18. Use all your senses. Hearing a lecture and seeing notes. Learn about wines by smelling, looking, tasting.
19. Believe in yourself. Do not give into the notion that older people inevitably lose mental capacities, but take measures to maintain cognitive abilities.
20. Prioritize your brain use. Take advantage of your smart phone to keep track of appointments, dates, maps, shopping lists, file folders, addresses. Designate places at home for keys, glasses, purses and other often used items. This enables you to put more time and energy into learning and remembering new and important things.
21. Repeat what you want to know and remember. Write it down or repeat it out loud. For example, when someone tells you their name, repeat it in conversation.
22. Spread out repetition. Instead of repeating something immediately, do it an hour later or a day later. This approach is especially valuable when trying to master and retain complicated material. Space out study time.
23. Alzheimer’s disease and other forms of dementia. Science has not determined precise causes or effective remedies. Some suggestions:
24. Exercise regularly: for example, 30 minutes of moderately vigorous aerobic exercise three to four days a week.
25. Eat a Mediterranean diet including fresh vegetables and fruits, whole grains, olive oil, nuts, legumes (beans, soy beans, peas, peanuts), fish and moderate amounts of poultry.
26. Get enough sleep (7 to 8 hours) which may help clear amyloid (wazy protein substance) from the brain.
27. Learn new things: New Zealand researchers claim it helps the brain build new cells that improves concentration, attention to detail, memory recall and problem solving and therefore reduces the chance of developing dementia.
28. Expand social contacts. Make new friends.
29. Avoid excessive and binge drinking of alcohol. One major MDPT study, done in 2020, concluded “An emerging body of research” contends that “light to moderate wine consumption seems to reduce the risk of mental and cognitive decline” but further research is needed.”
30. Managing Covid fatigue (cf UC Davis Health)
31. Exercise regularly.
32. Talk about your frustrations with family, friends or professionals.
33. Engage in constructive thinking.
34. Practice mindfulness. Live in the moment, take life day by day, be grateful for what is good in the present moment.
35. Look back, but carefully. Note the progress made on managing the pandemic and examples of resilience.
36. Find things to look forward to like a family gathering, eating out, a favorite sporting event.
37. Be compassionate with yourself. Do not expect perfection.
38. Let yourself laugh, it is therapeutic.
39. “Train the brain,” a 2021 Harvard Health Blog
40. The brain has the ability to learn and grow as we age.
41. Embracing a new activity is one of the best ways to keep the brain healthy and improve memory recall, problem solving, concentration and attention to detail.
42. The new activity should be challenging, complex and require regular practice.
43. Advice: concentrate on just one activity; for example, learning a language, how to play a musical instrument; writing a personal history, doing yoga or quilting; take a class, schedule regular practice time (consistency is more important than length).
44. If learning something new seems too daunting, try improving a current activity: for example, a casual golfer could take a lesson and practice more to improve her game. Working to improve is more important than success.
45. Christian Spirituality
46. Awareness
47. The Christ who walks at our side experienced, according to the Gospels, a wide range of emotions: joy in abiding in his Father’s love; a joy he wants to share with his disciples (John 15:10-11); exhaustion from ministry (Mark 6:31); anger at the hypocrisy of religious leaders – “You brood of vipers” (Matt 23:33); disgust with Temple money changers (John 2:13-17); sorrow – Jesus wept at the death of Lazarus (John 17:33-35); compassion for a widow who lost her son (Luke 7:11-17); frustration with his slow learning disciples (Mark 4:35-41); agony over impending suffering (Luke 22:42); care for his mother while dying on the cross (John 19:2-27); abandonment on the cross – “ Father, why have you forsaken me” (Matt 27:46).
48. The Holy Spirit who dwells within us prompts us to seek the truth. Be prepared to give a reason for your faith (1Peter 3:15).
49. Application
50. We should honestly face and name our emotions even negative and embarrassing ones.
51. The Catholic tradition has celebrated the importance of learning, philosophy is the hand maid of theology. Aquinas as a model, the establishment of universities in the Middle Ages. The Church in the U.S. established a large number of parish grade schools as well as regional high schools and major universities. Parents sacrificed to send their children to Catholic schools. Since Vatican II, there has been greater emphasis on adult education. Due to the GI Bill, many Catholics were able to go to college after WWII. All of this sets the stage for following the secular advice to keep learning and learning new things.
52. Practice
53. Daily self-examination or examination of conscience as part of a regular prayer routine. This is a good way to recognize personal growth and destructive behavior and to understand and name emotional responses.
54. Celebrating the Sacrament of Penance which can prompt feelings of gratitude for progress, recognize sinful patterns and doing a penance to prompt persistent growth in holiness.

III. Social Health

1. Mayo Clinic blog
2. Maintaining a strong social network contributes to a long healthier life.
3. Our social network is the group of people close to us: friends, family, co-workers, neighbors.
4. They supply “instrumental support” like transportation, child care and “emotional support” that lifts our spirits, relieves sadness, offers encouragement to pursue our goals, or help with problem solving.
5. Relationships change over time. As we age our social network will shrink.
6. Advice on expanding our network: deepen relationships with acquaintances; make the effort to reach out; attend events sponsored by church or civic organizations; join a group, club or cause that interests you; extend and accept invitations; be available.
7. Positive relationships can reduce stress, the risk of depression and promote confidence and happiness.
8. Critique of individualism (cf Robert Bellah *Habits of the Heart* 1985)

1. Recognizes the powerful force of individualism on American culture which promotes good such as personal freedom but is insufficient for promoting a full human life lived in communities and social institutions.

2. In family life self-fulfillment is more important than commitment; in friendships personal gain is more important than care for the other; developing a personal faith is more important than fidelity to a religious tradition.

3. Two types of individualism: Utilitarian represented by Benjamin Franklin which celebrates getting ahead by one’s own initiative; Expressive represented by Walt Whitman which celebrates delight in sensual pleasures (see *Leaves of Grass*, especially “Song of Myself”).

4. Biblical religion offers a broader vision of the fulfilled life which does not reject individualism but transforms it. In the Bible, God choose a people, Israel, to be a light to the nation . True religion is to care for the widows, aliens and orphans. Importance of shared rituals and worship in a common Temple.

5. Republican tradition represented by Jefferson urges citizens to practice civic virtue which serves justice and the common good.

6. Martin Luther King combined biblical religion (the prophets on justice and Jesus on liberation) with the Republican tradition (Declaration of Independence and Constitution) to energize the civil rights movement through communal non-violent actions (sit-ins, marches).

1. Family: Advice from a sociologist.
2. Families, the building blocks of society, are the great resource for achieving social health. No family does this perfectly, all can be improved; some families are so dysfunctional that they actually are detrimental to social health.
3. Ideally a family provides a nourishing environment for its members to develop their potential; contributes to the good of schools, churches, neighborhoods and larger communities; helps develop a value system that influences character, enables good decisions and promotes responsible citizenship.
4. Extended families, aunts, uncles, cousins and especially grandparents can help provide a sense of tradition and diverse perspectives.
5. Strengthening family relationships: work on improving communications; show care and love in deeds and words (paying honest compliments); show extra support to troubled members; make sacrifices for the good of others; be committed to the good of the family; respect individuality; work together to solve problems; share household tasks; spend time together; share meals; pay attention to the needs of others.
6. Sometimes separation and divorce are the best solution to destructive marital relationships.
7. Mitigate destructive effects of a divorce (about ½ of first marriages end in divorce): try to maintain civility and reach an equitable agreement about custody of children; make sure children do not think it is their fault; do not stress to children faults of your divorced partner.
8. Advice on family life from a spiritual director
9. Be realistic about family life. Almost half of first marriages fail; less than half of children are living in a family with two married parents in their first marriage; all families experience conflict and miscommunication as did the Holy Family (Jesus remaining in Jerusalem Temple, Mary trying to halt the itinerate ministry of Jesus - Mark 3:21). All personal needs cannot be satisfied within the family.
10. Forgive family members for being human, limited persons with aggravating foibles and disturbing faults.
11. Learn to recognize and respect their virtues, good qualities, distinctive contributions to family life.
12. Try to eat some family meals together and have everyone participate in preparation and cleaning up.
13. Attend Sunday worship together, take turns leading prayers before meals, share stories of faith.
14. Enjoy leisure activities, vacations, picnics, school events and sports.
15. For young children: read often to them and ask questions about content; stress they are responsible for homework but be ready to help them; take them to an interesting place outside home (a park, zoo, game).
16. Invite older children to help compose a family calendar available on their phones or planning a family event.
17. Encourage boys and girls to follow an interest: for example, playing an instrument, participating in a sport, developing a hobby. The great impact of Title IX that expanded sports opportunities for girls and women.
18. Constantly work to improve communication: try to express honestly and clearly thoughts and feelings, be an active listener, pay close attention (put aside distractions, phone down) and replay what you heard; be cautious about offering advice; be attentive to the emotion behind the words; in conflict situations make sure opposing views are heard and possible solutions are examined, sometimes compromise is necessary and time outs are needed to control anger.
19. Parents should take time to attend to their own needs (sleep, exercise, time alone, leisure, prayer, friends, community service, parish).
20. Spouses should work on their marital relationship: date night, time away from children, exercising together, praying together, counselling if necessary.
21. Friendship and social health (cf Mayo Clinic blog)
22. Friends can promote health in various ways: celebrate good times and provide support in bad times; prevent isolation and loneliness; increase our sense of belonging and purpose; increase happiness and reduce stress; improve self-confidence and self-worth; help cope with traumas; encourage us to avoid unhealthy activities such as lack of exercise or excessive drinking.
23. In today’s world maintaining friendships and making new friends takes effort, especially when so much energy must be put into family and work; revisit neglected friendships; deepen relationships with neighbors and colleagues.
24. Quality is more important than quantity. We need friends who will stick by us in good times and bad.
25. Be cautious about making friends on-line. Chat groups and on-line communities may help relieve loneliness but research suggests they do no necessarily expand our personal support group. Be careful about sharing personal information on social media.
26. Friendships require mutuality. Be a good friend while relying on friends. Be a good listener while opening up to your friend.
27. Friendship advice from a spiritual director
28. Aquinas: “There is nothing on the earth more to be prized than true friendship.” It is the source of “the greatest pleasure.”
29. Distinguish erotic romantic relationship, falling in love from friendships that typically develop over time and require a certain amount of mutual effort, shared values and common concerns. Greek philosophy distinguishes 3 kinds of love: Agape (divine love); Eros (romantic sexual love); Philia (affectionate love for others, including friends).
30. Concentrate on doing good for our friends but accept the reality that motives are mixed. Aristotle distinguishes three reasons for loving our friends: useful for us; pleasurable for us; because they are virtuous in a particular attractive way.
31. Deepen and extend our caring for our friends: real empathy for their suffering; rejoice in their successes; celebrate their virtues. Be open to being influenced by the care offered by our friends. In a healthy friendship there is a mutual reciprocal caring.
32. Solidify trust through word and action that allows for intimate sharing, revealing embarrassing secrets, hidden motives and questionable opinions.
33. Recognize ways a friend is different and use it as a catalyst for self-examination. For example, my friend is much more open in sharing feelings, maybe I should do more of that. Do not force your own distinctive self on the friend but remember good example can help the friend.
34. Some friendships are not good for either party. Covid has provided an opportunity to sort our friendships. It may be a good time to sever mutually destructive ones. Charity should guide this process to avoid unnecessary harm and hurt.
35. Reintroduce, continue or expand shared activities which reflect shared values and solidify the relationship. Reconnecting after Covid may take a lot of effort and may be initially draining but psychologists suggest this is normal and it will get easier. Choose carefully (rather than being motivated by obligation) which friendships to work on first, perhaps the ones you miss the most or are the most fulfilling. Build a routine that ensures regular encounters (join a book club, get concert tickets together, join the parish knitting group, sign up for a golf league). If virtual encounters worked during the pandemic repeat them periodically. Find something new and exciting to do together to expand the friendship.
36. Recognize that there are degrees of friendship: best friends that we want to see often; good friends less often, casual friends now and then. Do not expect all friendships to be stimulating and fulfilling. Enjoy what is possible.
37. See friendship as a way of living Christ’s call to love our neighbor by making ourselves available and sacrificing for friends, thus building community, overcoming polarization and serving the common good.
38. Spiritual dimension of social health
39. Awareness: Christianity teaches we are members of God’s family and of Christ’s body, united by the Holy Spirit; that we are not isolated individuals but interdependent persons intrinsically connected to our world and to all human beings by spiritual bonds deeper than anything that divides us.
40. Application: We can promote social health by living in the moment; accepting the strengths and weaknesses of our family members; setting aside our own needs to care for friends.
41. Practice: Join a support group of persons with similar challenges (for example, divorced, addictions to address alcohol, drugs); full, active, conscious participation in the liturgy can sharpen and express our awareness of the communal character of human nature; get involved in a parish activity (for example, the social justice committee or finance council); volunteer to help the needy (for example, serving meals); reach out to a friend in need of support.

IV. Spiritual Health

1. Deeping awareness of the divine presence
2. Origen of Alexandria (d. 254)(the most influential Eastern theologian) taught that we have five internal senses, corresponding to our external senses. We are called to develop and use them to see, hear, taste, smell and touch the divine within us.
3. Augustine of Hippo (d. 430) Father of Western theology, in his search for truth, examined the creatures of the world and the beauty of nature but did not find God there. He then turned inward to examine his memory and the workings of his mind that led him to the God who is beyond our thoughts and imagining (cf *Confessions Book 10).*
4. Thomas Merton (d. 1968) Trappist monk encourages us to become our true self. Our false self wants to exist outside the reach of God’s will and love; it is the self we want to project to impress others; it is self-governed by pride. Our true self is made in the image and likeness of God. We become aware of it by trusting God, following God’s will, by being silent in God’s presence, by living wholeheartedly in the moment, by being open to God’s call, by striving to be authentic and faithful to regular prayer and meditation. Our peace and happiness depend on finding God and finding our true self. We already have within what we are searching for. Through prayer we come to a new consciousness of God’s presence within us which frees us from the tyranny of the false self.
5. John Shea (*Spirituality HealthCare* pp. 92-112 and *Gospel Light* pp. 17-44) Spiritual health requires that we go within; develop consciousness; see with the “first eye of the soul;” find the kingdom within as Jesus taught; move from being asleep to being awake; become more aware of how our mind works; discover our true self; avoid identifying ourselves with some external reality like our body type; follow the traditional wisdom “know they self;” practice going within by going away, being silent, praying and meditating regularly; develop a healthy relationship to our being; recognize true purpose of religious practice like prayer, fasting and alms giving as Jesus taught; overcome “chronic busyness” and the preoccupation with external events. The first eye recognizes that we participate in divine life and are divinized as St. Basil the Great said “We become God;” that we are in community with all people and all things (Thomas Merton in downtown Louisville felt united to all the people on the street); that grace is a renewable resource, love shared increases; the Spirit is more powerful and abundant than all the dark forces.
6. Integrating the inner and outer worlds
7. Spiritually healthy people go within in order to participate in the outer world more effectively and fruitfully.
8. Prayer and meditation prepare us to stay calm in our graced but stressful world.
9. Christian hope enables us to see the light even in the darkness of war, sickness and polarization.
10. We are called to be contemplatives in action, prayerfully prophetic.
11. The Holy Spirit
12. We are temples of the Holy Spirit and should honor our bodies (1Cor 6:19-20).
13. God enables us to overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom 15:13).
14. Christ sends us the Advocate, the Holy Spirit who teaches us all things (John 14:26).
15. God’s love has been passed into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given us (Rom 5:5).
16. The Holy Spirit comes to us so we can be witnesses of Christ (Acts: 1:8).
17. Christ sends us the Advocate, the Spirit of Truth who testifies about him (John 15:26).
18. Religion and spirituality
19. Many people today say they are spiritual but not religious. “Nones” are those with no religious connection and now over 20% of the U.S. population. Many of them retain interest in spiritual matters.
20. Christianity at its best is rooted in authentic spiritual experience and promotes spiritual growth.
21. Participation in Church life can foster healthy outlooks and practices in all dimensions of human life.
22. Christ the Healer, the Divine Physician (cf *Jesus as Healer* by John Pilch)
23. Background: “Sickness” is a broad term meaning something is wrong with the human body: “Disease” is a modern term identifying a specific physical problem like diabetes or blocked arteries; “Illness” is a term that interprets sickness in a socio-cultural perspective involving loss of meaning; “Cure” involves removing or arresting the cause of a disease restoring or improving a person’s well-being; “Healing” involves a restoration of meaning to life even it the physical condition remains the same. The Gospel stories do not make these distinctions. For example, we do not know what disease the biblical lepers had or any of those aided by Jesus. We can say they were suffering from illnesses that made them impure and excluded them from community life and consequent loss of meaning.
24. Pilch presents Jesus as a “folk healer” in his culture who used folk techniques such as touching, using spittle as mud and pronouncing powerful words like “Talitha Koum” an Aramaic phrase meaning “Little girl arise.” Jesus often connected healing to a person’s faith (Mark 5:34) and could not heal those who lacked faith (Mark 6:5).
25. Throughout Christian history important teachers have referred to Christ as a physician including Origen and Augustine.
26. Mark’s Gospel (1st written around 70 AD not an eyewitness) Jesus “healed many who were sick and drove out many demons” (1:32-34) both involved Jesus restoring well-being. He is a “mighty broker” invoking God’s healing power and demonstrating the presence of God’s kingdom.
27. Matthew, written in the 80s, used Mark as a source. In chapters 8 and 9 clusters 10 of the miracles of Jesus stressing his compassion for the needy who receive instruction and are restored to a state of well-being. Jesus cures those possessed by demons (literally the moonstruck or lunatics) demonstrating greater power than the contemporary magicians who worship the moon.
28. Luke, written in the 80s, dependent on Mark, says Jesus “bestowed sight on many that were blind” (7:21-22) and yet mentions only one example (18:35-43). Jesus heals sociocultural blindness. We are all called to improve our sight so we can understand and appreciate Christ’s life and teaching. The crowds who witnessed the death of Jesus went home “beating their breasts” (23:48). In the context of Luke’s Gospel we can say they saw and believed. The Acts of the Apostles (the second volume produced by Luke) continues the theme of seeing “wonders and signs” performed by the followers of Jesus. For Luke, Jesus is an “authorized spirit filled prophet” who vanquishes unclean spirits and heals the illness associated with them.
29. John’s Gospel (written in the 90s by followers of the Beloved Disciple) recounts seven progressively more remarkable signs starting with Cana and ending with raising of Lazarus. Very little said about the actual miracles and a good deal of explanatory material. John calling the miracles “works” reminds us of God’s works in creating the world and freeing Israel from slavery. Some of the seven works are life-giving (Lazarus); others are meaning restoring works (blind man). In all of them, Jesus the healer, restored meaning to people’s lives.
30. Jesus breaks the presumed connection between sin and sickness, denying that a man was born blind because of the sin of his parents or his own sin, adding enigmatically “it is so that the works of God might be made visible through him” (John 9: 1-3).
31. Pope Benedict distinguishes the work of Christ that brings healing to people of faith on this earth and his gift of salvation in the new and definitive life of heaven.
32. The Church carries on the healing ministry of Christ in various ways: celebrating the Eucharist, the principle sacrament of healing, including taking communion to the sick; the Sacrament of Penance which celebrates God’s mercy and promotes reconciliation; anointing of the sick designed to give meaning to persons seriously ill, suffering from isolation; assisting the poor and marginalized deprived of proper nutrition, sanitation and scarcity of ordinary medicines.