Prayer

We pause to bring to mind particular individuals, communities, and nations in need of healing and wholeness at this very moment. (Silence)

Lord, you heal our wounds. Help us to minister in your name, as we pray:

- For the sensitivity to recognise the suffering in those around us.
  Lord, help us to be aware of the whole person.
- For the willingness to go the extra mile.
  Enlarge our hearts with your generosity.
- For a special appreciation of the dedicated work of medical personnel.
  Lord, strengthen them in their healing vocation.
- For those who place their lives in danger in order to help others in need.
  Keep them safe from all harm.

We thank you, Lord, for those who inspire us with their healing ways. Deepen your saving presence in our lives. We make this prayer in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Additional thoughts

Ten ways...to contribute to a ‘field hospital’ moment:

1. Just ’be there.’ Or, as the situation demands, get out of the way!
2. Who is best equipped to minister to this person in this moment? Maybe you don’t have time to ask that question: it’s you or no one!
3. Treat the wound. Talk religion/politics later.
4. Respond to the person.
5. Stay calm and focused.
7. Keep useful items in arms reach; even if just a box of tissues.
8. Deal with the emergency as appropriate, but as soon as practical place the wounded one under the care of the appropriate person/agency.
9. If possible, follow up later to check on their progress.
10. Over to you... from your experience, add a tenth point.

Reflection & Prayer

“I see the Church as a field hospital after battle.”

In an interview with Antonio Spadaro SJ in August 2013, Pope Francis said:

“The thing the church needs most today is the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful; it needs nearness, proximity. I see the church as a field hospital after battle. It is useless to ask a seriously injured person if he has high cholesterol and about the level of his blood sugars! You have to heal his wounds. Then we can talk about everything else. Heal the wounds, heal the wounds. ... And you have to start from the ground up.

Reported at “A Big Heart Open to God,” America magazine Sept. 19, 2013.

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“I must say first that the contribution of the Church in today’s world is enormous. The pain and the shame we feel at the sins of some members of the Church, and at our own, must never make us forget how many Christians are giving their lives in love. They help so many people to be healed or to die in peace in makeshift hospitals. They are present to those enslaved by different addictions in the poorest places on earth. They devote themselves to the education of children and young people. They take care of the elderly who have been forgotten by everyone else. They look for ways to communicate values in hostile environments. They are dedicated in many other ways to showing an immense love for humanity inspired by the God who became man. I am grateful for the beautiful example given to me by so many Christians who joyfully sacrifice their lives and their time.”

Images & Stories

Think of concrete examples of the ‘field hospitals’ of which Francis speaks.

For example:

• “The family who cares for a member with a chronic illness. Just getting through each day can be a battle. They sustain their loved one with material and emotional support, and at times emergency treatment.”

• “I once had to break the news of a terribly upsetting truth to someone; that was a ‘field hospital’ moment as I helped this person to deal with their shock and grief.”

• “Teachers are expected to be ready to handle emergencies, whether it be carrying around the EpiPen, or dealing with a crisis for one of the families in the school. There are big crises and small ones. You never know what each day will bring.”

• “I give of my time to Vinnies food van. We go out to people on city streets and share a coffee, sandwich, conversation. It’s a field hospital of sorts.”

Think too of field hospitals, literally. E.g.,

• *Medecins Sans Frontieres/Doctors Without Borders* provides a medical presence in some of the world’s most dangerous places. In 2012 it established a field hospital near Aleppo, Syria under the guise of a residential villa. It was eventually discovered and declared illegal by the Syrian regime.

• Israel has a reputation for its speed in being able to set up field hospitals and in recent years has done so in response to devastating events in Haiti (2010), Japan (2011), at its Syrian border for Syrian war casualties (2013) and at its Gazan border for Palestinian casualties of the Israel-Hamas conflict (2014).

Think about the community where you live and work:

• Where is there a ‘field hospital’? Who works there? Who do they treat? What are the challenges facing those involved?

• Think about your own experience of either assisting or being assisted in a ‘field hospital’ moment.

• What is the essence of effective ‘field hospital’ personnel?

“There are field hospital ‘moments’ in an ordinary day... those moments when you have to drop everything and attend to the needs of a particular child or an adult who is fragile or struggling.”

Scripture

Continue to reflect with the enrichment of Scripture.

• “The Lord heals the broken hearted and binds up their wounds” (Psalm 147:3).

• “But I will restore you to health and heal your wounds, thus declares the Lord” (Jeremiah 30:17).

• “Come to me, all who are heavy burdened...” (Matthew 11:28).

• “The news about [Jesus] spread throughout all Syria; and they brought to him all who were ill, those suffering with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; and he healed them” (Matthew 4:24).

• Jesus said, “It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick” (Matthew 9:12).

Reflection

• As missionary disciples we are called to heal and bind up wounds; and to do this lifegiving work wherever we see the need, and regardless of whether or not the person in need is ‘one of us’ or is ‘deserving’ of help. Remember the parable of the Good Samaritan.

• As a missionary disciple think about the ‘healing tools’ in your first-aid kit. It may very well include bandages and a defibrillator. It might also include your time, compassion, sensitivity, your home-cooked lasagna, your listening ear and wisdom, your financial resources, your prayer.

• Healing and wholeness are integral to the salvation to which the Scriptures attest. God is not just interested in our ‘spiritual’ selves; God is interested in the whole of us. Indeed, as Catholics we profess belief in the resurrection of the body.