

Taking Care of the Sick People in Small Christian Communities

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Sickness has always been viewed as a fall from God's grace, caused by sin and evil. The first man, Adam chose to rebel against God; thus cut himself from Him, and hence became imperfect, vulnerable to sickness and eventually died. (Gen. 2:17; 3:1-19; Ps. 36:9). Sickness has therefore been linked to sin ever since. According to CCC 1502, the man of the Old Testament leaves his sickness in the presence of God. It is before God that he laments his illness, and it is to God, Master of life and death, that he implores healing. Informed by this school of thought, I am looking at how the sick are cared for, spiritually and physically, in their communities in line with the dictates of Sacred Scripture, focusing on the role of the Small Christian Community (SCC).

Spiritual Care

The SCC is viewed as the primary Church, a family of worshipers of the "Body of Christ." It is the Community where everyone is bound to be part of the society. The society therefore takes responsibility in the welfare of its people, with an underlining thought that "we are created for the other." It is through all men that the right relationship of the entire world of Christ is established, to be partakers in redemption and salvation, and it is through such groupings that this can be achieved (Flannery 767-68).

When one falls sick in a community, members of the SCC arrange special prayer visits for the sick, with frequency being determined by the intensity of the illness. The prayer sessions are meant to keep the spirit of the sick up, so that he may not feel neglected. It is always during the time of sickness that we get close to God. It therefore becomes more appealing to the sick when members of their community come for prayer, as this will give them hope and feel God's visit and presence. CCC 1503 states that Christ has compassion toward

the sick and his many healings of every kind of infirmity, are a sign that “God has visited His people” and the Kingdom is at hand. This is how visits by members of the SCC help in the healing of the sick person; the presence of Christ.

The SCC leadership has the responsibility of informing the priest, of the sickness in the area. Our priests have dedicated days for visits to the sick. This is a very welcome development that gives hope to our sick and help in recovery psychologically as they feel they still belong to the greater community of Jesus Christ. With the prayers, penance and the communion offered by our priests, the sick are spiritually uplifted and feel the belonging to the society.

We have ministers of the Eucharist, who every Sunday visit the sick and administer communion. This is also one positive development that our parish has kept going which is greatly appreciated. The sick are not left to their close family alone but are included in the greater community of Christ.

Physical Care

The leadership of the SCCs are required to assess situations on the physical care of the sick. Where families are found to struggle in terms of finance, which may affect the supply of food and medicines for the sick, they bring the issue to the community and discuss ways of how the family might be helped. It does not help to pray for someone and then leave him hungry when there is a clear sign that hunger is going to kill him. As St. James says; “Faith without works is dead” (James 2:14-26) it is from the schooling of this scripture that the community must be concerned with the physical welfare of the sick. Those who can afford, do bring the necessities on individual basis and offer for the sick.

Conclusion

A sick person requires attention. He gets it from his close family members, but if that attention is spread to the greater community, he

gets extra hope of life and feels the closeness of God. Care for the sick from a community based perspective, must be greatly encouraged as it brings togetherness in the love of Christ and the Father. It binds communities together and that feeling of “created for the other” grows.

List of Sources

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