**Visiting the sick, continuing Jesus’ mission**

One of the ways that Jesus witnessed to the love of God during his life on earth was in ministering to the sick. While most of us are impressed with Jesus’ physical cures; how he cured blindness or leprosy or raised people from the dead, Jesus also made people well in a spiritual way. By this I mean that their physical ailments may have remained, but they received the greater gift of being reunited with God.

Jesus would often heal a person spiritually before continuing to heal them physically. He did this probably to set the person’s mind at ease that he or she was not being punished by God. A spiritual healing can last for the whole of a person’s life while a physical healing, on the other hand, lasts only for a time. Lazarus, for example, whom Jesus raised from the dead, had to die again.

A spiritual healing reconnects us to God. St. Paul says that when we do the right thing and walk in the ways of the Lord, then “neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

All of us can bring Jesus’ healing presence to people who are sick. We just need to be ourselves. If we do not block God’s love from filling us, then we can easily shine this love on people who are sick. When we visit a person in the hospital, for example, a smile, a compassionate word, or bringing along a small gift are all ways that God’s healing presence is made known to others. They may not pick up their mat and walk, as did the man who was paralyzed in the Gospels, but our sick friends and relatives will know that they have been visited by someone who cares.

Although sickness and death are natural occurrences in life, it is still a difficult test for our faith. Pope John Paul II wrote: “Death presents a certain dark side which cannot but bring sadness and fear. How could it be otherwise? Humanity has been made for life, whereas death … was not part of God’s plan.” Even Jesus was afraid of dying. He cried out in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night before his crucifixion: “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.” In other words, Jesus said: “Papa God, don’t let me die.”

Ultimately, Jesus trusted in his Father. He bravely went to his death on the cross. Now there is no separation between us and God. God, in Jesus, experienced everything that is human, even death. We now have nothing to fear from death. That is why at our Catholic funeral liturgies we hear: “Lord, for your faithful people life is changed, not ended. When the body of our earthly dwelling lies in death we gain an everlasting dwelling place in heaven.” “In Christ,” Pope John Paul II reflected, “death — tragic and disconcerting as it is — is redeemed and transformed; it is even revealed as a “sister” who leads us to the arms of our Father.”

So the next time you have an opportunity to visit a person who is sick, do not hesitate. Your presence alone is healing. Christ continues his healing mission through you.

(Originally published in the Catholic Chronicle of St. Lucia)