

BODY AS SACRAMENT

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(5:24 - Mary Ann Sirocco #2)

Welcome. A Sacrament is an outward sign instituted by Christ to give grace. Thank you for coming to share the sacrament of your body. I invite you to fully participate. We'll begin with some movement then talk a little, move a little more and so on. We'll begin by warming up, stretching but don't stretch beyond your physical abilities. Pay attention to your body. We are going to cover a lot. If you need to rest for a while, do so. Rejoin us when you can. Enter into the experience. We can process it at the end. We will mix movement with talk and role playing. Do what you can. Sit when you need to.

We'll begin by stretching reaching up to Divine Sunshine and bringing it down to our roots. Stretch to our side. Let your spirit become one with the music allowing your body to follow. Your spirit is tremendously grace filled so relax into it. Continue to stretch. (We went through the words for "O Mama Bakudala" as we stretched.) Stretch out those shoulders. Move your hips. Keep moving and repeat after me.

Stop now, that your bodies are stretched. During the next song, let your feet become one with the music and move in a clockwise direction. Feel free to move outside the room (many did) since we have limited space. After your feet are connected with the music let the rest of your body follow.

(Three Altos, "O Mama Bakudala" #2 1:22)

With this next short piece let your body flow, move becoming one with the music.

(Carey Landry, "Song of Joy")

Have a seat. There are disciplines like Tai Chi that give form to movement. Through using the form, one relaxes, clears the mind and opens the spirit. What we used today was not disciplined. Everyone was encouraged to become one with the music. The songs with words were chosen from languages most in the group would not recognize. They were prayers in unknown tongues in hopes that your spirit and body could interpret the prayers. Did you sense the songs as prayers?

While I have always enjoyed dance, one April Fool's Day on the steps of the law library in Ann Arbor Michigan, we donned face and were sent into the community for two hours. For part of the time I slipped into a church, someone was practicing organ. I began to move. As I did I finally processed my grief from my Father's death the previous Sept. So since then I have been encouraging people to move to the music.

MINISTRY SCENARIOS

(Smoke of Sage 5:41 #10 Sirrocco)

Please group yourself with two unknown friends or strangers and two chairs, spreading out filling the room. So you are in groups of three with two chairs. Direction is unimportant.

If you are looking for a group of three come up towards me until you find someone.

#1 Two sit down. The person without the chair move from the group about 20-30 feet. Now, don't forget where your group is. One of those seated, raise your hand. You are the visitor. The other one is the patient. The person outside the group is the chaplain. Chaplain this is your first visit. This room number was on your list you don't even know the patient's name. Go visit until the bell rings. Chaplains ground yourself. When you are ready, approach the group and begin the conversation.

#2 Everyone stand. Chaplain you are now patient. Visitor you are chaplain. Patient you are visitor. Patient you need to decide whether to have surgery. There is a 25% chance of you not surviving the surgery. If the surgery is successful your life continues with minimal limitations from your disease. Without the surgery your life expectancy is a year at most. You have called the chaplain to help discern God's will. Visitor you don't want the chaplain present. If there were a God you wouldn't be in this situation.

#3 Now patient, you are the visitor, the next of kin. Visitor you become the chaplain. Chaplain you are a patient, terminal cancer, you have accepted it and are ready to die. The person next to you is one who has been begging you not to go on comfort care only. (DNR-DNI) You want their okay before you sign the DNR-DNI papers and have asked the chaplain to help you.

Look back over those three scenarios. Is standing ever the comfortable position to minister? Anyone travel with a folding chair so you can always sit a spell when ministering? Our standing, sitting, leaning over a patient, touching or not, our body positions are part of our ministry.

Freeze where you are and look around the room. From position can you tell who the chaplain is and who the patient is? Relax. Can we truly minister when we are the only one standing? We may need to be creative in finding a place to hide a chair, but our body language speaks loudly. You may wish to have someone observe you from outside hearing range and tell you what your non-verbal said.

BODY DRUMMING

Please move the chairs to the side and have a seat. Anyone here using drumming as part of your ministry? (A few did.) You don't need drums for it.

"How do you feel?" is an important question, we ask. It's hard to answer. We have conflicting emotions. Shock numbs us. Take a deep breath. Then using your body as a drum, find a sound pattern that resonates with you. Explore how many different ways you can use your body as a drum. Then drum a sound that expresses yourself right now.

When pain is beyond words, drumming can give it some expression. A group of teens in a mental health ward attending a grief/loss class can drum their pain. A group gathering to pray in the midst of a crisis may also benefit from hearing their pain drummed. But caution, drumming can also amplify the pain. Very young children might benefit more from drumming their sadness over a loss in a pillow.

PRAYER SERVICES

There are times, when such drumming might work as a group gathers in the midst of a developing tragedy. What other resources are available?

How many use the prayer service for healing in the missalettes or song books in your chapel. If not, check them out.

How many have Bibles with appropriate passages highlighted and marked? If you have a copy of the Lectionary readings, be aware that the last revision of the Lectionary removed a lot of passages showing strong or successful women. So you may want to add some of the verses that have been edited out.

We had prayer cards with psalms available. For small groups, these can be passed out so all can join in the prayer.

What songs have you found work for these services? Suggestions included: "Amazing Grace," "How Great Thou Art." One noted some of these same songs trigger negative reactions with some groups. So interacting with the attendees is important. When people suggest songs I don't know or are out of my singing range, I ask for someone to lead the song. Often someone steps forward.

SAMPLE SPONTANEOUS SERVICE PLANNING

On behalf of Pat's family, I thank you for gathering here to pray. Pat's family has asked me to tell you, Pat was found unconscious, resuscitated and brought to the hospital. Situation is critical. So as we gather to pray I invite your suggestions for our prayer. You know Pat, what songs would you suggest? Any special readings - possibly look at the ones in the booklet. (I have a small photo album with a variety of appropriate readings inserted in the pages which some groups have used. Others just need a Bible)

In inviting people to pray I often set the tone to counteract our cultural non-Scripture heresies:

Everything happens for a reason.
God willed it for a higher good.
God is using this to teach us a lesson.

These heresies are presented in some of the most painful statements that can compound the grieving process. Hearing, "It's God's will," or "Everything happens for a reason," can distance the person from such a God and create a crisis of faith.

This non-Scriptural rubbish denies a loving God and our free will. We are not puppets. A far more Scriptural statement, based on the book of Job, would be: "SHIT HAPPENS."

We have the choice, with our free will and the grace of God, to redeem any situation. I have met many people whose lives shriveled when their child or spouse died. Jacob Wetterling was not abducted so his mother, Patty Wetterling could set up a foundation to save other children. Rather, Patty, who I know and admire, took her pain and redeemed it so no other mother had to face the same pain. A choice.

A sample of a prayer

Let us pray:

Good and Loving God, you cry with us at this pain.

God, you will that we all live in joy and health.

Generous God, you gave us free wills allowing us to make mistakes that affect our life and health, as well as those of others.

We pray for healing, knowing it is your will that we all be healed.

We pray, not knowing if Pat's body is beyond physical healing.

We ask that the doctors and health care team have your wisdom in their diagnosis and treatment options. Bless Pat's family during any difficult decisions they may need to make.

May we support Pat, the family and each other

As chaplains we often deal with Grief. One day I was called to the mental health ward and asked to see a woman, because, "Marty, we can't do anything with her." When we met, I asked her to join me in moving to music. I invite you to try the same song as we move to "Save Me," by Neal & Leandra. We did several songs, some drumming and had some quiet time. She thanked me but did not discuss the experience. However, during our time together she faced some of her feelings and fears and was able to process them with the health professionals.

HEALING TOUCH

Moving on - stand. Take a deep breath erasing everything from your mind. Imagine Divine Love radiating from you going up to the heavens and down, connecting you to the earth. Your energy, your love is radiating out. See if you can feel it in your hands. In a group of three form a circle with your hands 3-5 inches apart. See if you can feel the energy.

This energy is used in an alternate healing modality called healing touch. How many are familiar with it. (Several in the group had previous healing touch experience.) We are going to experience one of its techniques called magnetic cleansing. One person sits on a chair. The other two stand facing each other. Ground yourself, breath deeply. Turn your hands towards one other almost touching, breath deeply, relaxing.

Now if you are seated in the chair, I ask for the other two, are you willing to allow us to work on your energy field? If you are say, "Yes." Everyone present in this room are you willing to enter into this experiment asking that no harm be done but the greatest good come of it?

Ministers, relax your hands so they are like rakes. Starting about 12" above the crown of the head, move them about two to six inches above the body from a foot above the crown of the head to about a foot beyond the feet. Then start again at the crown moving down. Do this about 15 times, both working together. As you come down move out to cover the whole person.

Now both ministers gently touch the person's feet, grounding them to the earth. How many sitting could feel a change during the magnetic cleansing? (Most did.) How many who were doing the magnetic cleansing found the energy field changed as you worked? (Most did.) Take a minute to share your experience in your group. Usually magnetic cleansing is done with the person lying down.

(We then switched places so all could experience healing touch.)

Our hospital offered healing touch as an alternate healing modality. But referrals often went unfilled if those training in healing touch were too busy with their other duties. So I took Healing Touch Training. The Monday after the training weekend, I was called to a patient's room. He said he needed to talk to a chaplain but he was too scattered to gather his thoughts. He explained that he had had a brain injury many years ago. But now his body was shutting down and the doctor's couldn't find the reason. He was familiar with healing touch from his rehab at Sister Kinney. So I began magnetic cleansing to help him calm down.

During magnetic cleansing, he identified when his deterioration started. He identified a recurring situation that resulted in him getting sicker. After he had calmed, he called his counselor and asked for an appointment. Then he relaxed into sleep.

The next day his wife was with him when I visited. He recognized me but had no idea what had happened. When I recapped the visit, his wife acknowledged that a certain situation indeed paralleled her husband's deterioration. She also said that for the first time in six weeks, her husband's vitals were improving. His body was healing rather than shutting down.

Another time as I used magnetic cleansing with a distraught patient, she acknowledged in the presence of her husband, she wanted to die. She felt this when her car started to skid and really did not want to pull it to safety.

It's amazing what people learn when we help them settle their conflicting energies.

PET THERAPY

I visited a patient who was in panic. He had just been told he had two weeks to live. He told me all of Aquinas proofs for the existence of God, but said, "My head knows God is a possibility. But I can't believe it."

Kat our therapy dog, walked by with his owner, JP. The patient said he'd like to see the dog. I told him I would arrange it and see him tomorrow. The next day he glowed. He said he knew God was real.

He explained that when Kat lay next to him, he felt universal love. He knew God is real. This was the first of many referrals I made.

One time I met Kat & JP as they were leaving. I had asked them to see a patient who moved Job's life to the normal side of the bell curve. JP said it went poorly. Kat wanted to minister to the woman and seemed frustrated. We went back together. The patient trusted me. Every time Kat tried loving her she resisted. I had to constantly remind her to let go. She finally did. She was put at the top of Kat's patient list. The doctors saw such an improvement through pet therapy she left for rehab with a prescription from her doctor stating her cat was a necessary part of her therapy and needed to go with her to rehab.

So today we have experienced our bodies as sacrament. I encourage you to continue the exploration. Move with the music. Trust as you move out of the "think" mode God may be present with new insights.

As the group left, "I am Woman," a song with a lot of healing potential was played.

RESOURCE LIST

Here is the list of music used for the Body as Sacrament workshop.

Sirocco - www.bobbfantauzzo.com used for warm up and during healing touch.
Also great background music for meditation.

"O Mama Bakudala" from Three Altos used for moving feet. Has several prayers in other languages. Trio consists of a rabbi, a professor and a musician. See: www.threelaltos.com

"And the Father Will Dance" from Carey Landry's Abba Father. Whole CD is danceable.
www.ocp.org

"Save Me" from Hearts & Hammers by Neal & Leandra www.redhouserecords.com
"Turn the Page" from same album also excellent.

A Woman's Place "I Am Woman" (and my place is in the home and my home is the whole world") by SARA THOMSEN played at the end www.sarathomsen.com

Zero Church by Suzzy & Maggie Roche (album I left at home) has excellent songs both to dance to and many that I used during meditation time in the recovery unit (AA, NA ...) also at www.redhouserecords.com

For information on healing touch: <http://www.healingtouch.net/>

For information on pet therapy: www.therapyanimals.org or <http://www.paws4therapy.com/>