

a paper:

THEOLOGICAL & PASTORAL ASSUMPTIONS OF A PASTORAL CAREGIVER

Chaplain Robert Baral
12/18/2007

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- I. A MATTER OF DEFINITIONS FIRST
- II. MY THEOLOGICAL CONVICTIONS START WITH THE APOSTLES' CREED
- III. HOW I PREPARE FOR THE DAILY BATTLES OF MINISTRY
- IV. HOW DOES MY FAITH EFFECT THE WAY I MINISTER TO PEOPLE?
- V. HOW DO I UNDERSTAND HUMAN SUFFERING IN RELATION TO GOD?
- VI. WHAT IS MY MISSION WHEN I ENTER INTO PEOPLE'S SUFFERING?
- VII. HOW DO I UNDERSTAND GOD WORKS THROUGH ME AS HIS SERVANT?
- VIII. HOW DO I DEFINE A SUCCESSFUL CHAPLAIN MINISTRY VISIT?
- IX. IN CONCLUSION
- X. REFERENCES

I. A MATTER OF DEFINITIONS FIRST

QUESTION: What is theology? A more modern Webster dictionary says theology is “the study of GOD and relations to the universe.”¹ Noah Webster himself observes that the word “theology” is derived from the two Greek words: Theos, meaning “GOD” and Logos, meaning “discourse.”^{2 3} So theology is discourse about GOD. More exactly, Webster defines theology as “the science of GOD and Divine things... which teaches the existence, character and attributes of GOD, His Laws and government, the doctrines we are to believe, and the duties we are to practice.”⁴

Noah Webster offers the traditional Christian division of theology into “natural” and “revealed.” “Natural theology is the knowledge we have of GOD from His works, by the light of nature and reason.” It is what we may know of GOD and His will for us by studying the physical world in which we live, as well as ourselves, in the created order. “Revealed theology is that which is to be learned from [Special] Revelation” in The Bible. It is what we may know of GOD and His will for us by studying The Special Revelation of His revealed Word, The Holy Scriptures.

QUESTION: What is “pastoral care?” To be “pastoral” is to serve as “relating to the care of souls...”⁵ It is care rendered as a Shepherd over the lives and souls of others, such as in the position of a Pastor, one who is “a Minister of The Gospel who has the charge of a Church and congregation, whose duty is to watch over the people of his charge, and instruct them in the sacred doctrines of the Christian religion.”⁶ So “pastoral theology” is that knowledge of GOD and His will for us which we give to people’s lives and souls in a caring “pastoral” manner. The flock however need not be a Church congregation, but can just as well be in a prison, a homeless shelter, a school or clinical setting such as the hospital. And The Shepherd need not be only an ordained Minister, but may be a Chaplain.

QUESTION: What is a “Chaplain?” A modern Webster’s dictionary defines a Chaplain as “a member of the clergy who is attached to a chapel, military unit, etc.”⁷ For example, a hospital can in a way become a chapel - “a room or building for worship” – as when Chaplains minister to the spiritual and religious needs of people.⁸

¹ 1, Webster’s Desk Dictionary, “theology,” noun, p 927, entry #1.

² 2, GNT, JOHN 1:1, Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος. En arche en O Logos, kai O Logos en pros Ton Theon, kai Theos en O Logos.

³ 3, KJV, JOHN 1:1, “In the beginning was The Word, and The Word was with GOD, and The Word was GOD.”

⁴ 4, Noah Webster’s 1828 Dictionary, “theology,” noun, Divinity, p THE – THE.

⁵ 4, Ibid., “pastoral,” adverb, p PAS – PAT.

⁶ 4, Ibid., “Pastor,” noun, p PAS – PAT, entry # 2.

⁷ 1, Webster’s Desk Dictionary, “chaplain,” noun, p 152.

⁸ 1, Ibid., “chapel,” noun, p 152.

Hospital Chaplains learn in theory and practice to offer and provide spiritual and religious care to the lives and souls of those who are suffering – patients, families, fellow staff, even ourselves. We can make for example all the hospital a place of worship and care for the lives and souls of others. Chaplains then serve as ministers – some ordained and some laity – under the hand of GOD our Eternal Shepherd and directed under the authority and command of ministering superiors.

We can see “pastoral theology” in The Text of Scripture. David declares in PSALM 23:1, “...The LORD is my Shepherd; I shall not want.”⁹ We shall not want because GOD our Eternal Good Shepherd is always there to guide and uplift our lives and souls. Our Good Shepherd Incarnate, JESUS CHRIST, teaches us to pray in MATTHEW 6:9, “...Our Father, Which art in Heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name.”¹⁰ All the world is GOD’s chapel. He sends Chaplains into the lives of sufferers to pastor over them as His Chaplains to shepherd people into the pastures of His peaceful Presence. Therefore we may pray with Saint Francis of Assisi, as GOD sends us to shepherd others into His peaceful Presence, “Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace.”¹¹ This is “pastoral theology” in action.

II. MY THEOLOGICAL CONVICTIONS START WITH THE APOSTLES’ CREED

QUESTION: What are my theological convictions? They start with THE APOSTLES’ CREED. First, “I believe in GOD The Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.”¹² That GOD is The Eternal Creator, The First Cause and First Mover. He is outside of His creation and also imminent within all of creation. He is The Maker of all that exists and also The Sustainer of all that continues to exist. He is all powerful, all knowing and all present.

He is mystically everywhere present simultaneously in all places within time and space in the physical world at once. He is all just and all goodness. He can do all things that He wishes that are consistent with His Nature. That GOD has revealed Himself to us in the existence, order and purpose of the physical world in all systems on all levels, both living and non-living – including ourselves – i.e., “Natural” or “General” Revelation.

Second, I believe “...in JESUS CHRIST His only Son, our Lord; Who was conceived by The Holy Ghost, born of The Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; He ascended into Heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of GOD The Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.”¹³ That mankind is innately wicked because of Original Sin. That we are convicted as sinners by His Law

⁹ 3, KJV, PSALM 23:1.

¹⁰ 3, KJV, MATTHEW 6:9.

¹¹ 5, Catholic Forum, “Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi.”

<http://www.catholic-forum.com/saints/pray0027.htm> Retrieved 12/07/2007.

¹² 6, Spurgeon Archive, “The Apostles’ Creed (as usually recited today).” On GOD The Father. <http://www.spurgeon.org/~phil/creeds/apostles.htm>. Retrieved 12/07/2007.

¹³ 6, Ibid. On GOD The Son.

revealed to us through Moses. That we can not save ourselves from either sin or its consequences without His aide. That we therefore need a Redeemer.

That GOD has further revealed Himself and His will for us for both this life and for eternity in The Holy Scriptures – i.e., “Special” Revelation. This includes His Divine Law and His plan for our salvation by His Grace, the mercy He offers us that we do not in any way deserve. I believe that any man or woman who seeks GOD will find Him, for He is always with us, and that all such paths end at The Cross of JESUS CHRIST. That GOD alone is The Judge of the souls of all men, that we may reasonably hope for the salvation of those who profess and live a life of Faith in this life, but that GOD may save the soul of men even as a lifelong sinner takes a last breath, even just before the soul leaves the body, even in the twinkling of an eye.

Third, “I believe in The Holy Ghost; the holy catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.”¹⁴ That the souls of all men will stand before The Judgement Seat of CHRIST. That GOD loves us so much that, having made us in His Image, He desires that we grow to be remade in His Likeness. That to drive us to our knees and cause us to repent of our sins, He convicts us with His Divine Law. That to lift us up from our knees to Himself forever, He sent His only Son to suffer and die on The Cross to pay the penalty of our sin for us.

That if we believe with our hearts and confess with our mouths that JESUS CHRIST is Lord, we shall be forgiven our sins and dwell with Him both now and forever. Not that this is a magical formula, but that it is the beginning of the Christian life. That there is an eternal Heaven where the righteous shall live with GOD forever, where there is no more suffering, death, sorrow or tears. That there is an eternal hell where the unrepentant soul suffers forever. That The Kingdom of GOD in Heaven is already here now in part on earth in The Church, which began in The Garden, expanded to Noah and his family, through Abraham and the patriarchs, to Israel under David’s throne and into all the world as The Church of CHRIST. That when CHRIST comes again, He will establish Heaven on earth in full.

That The Catholic Church possesses the fullest Truth of The Christian Faith, that whatever she declares to be GOD’s Truth is exactly that, GOD’s Truth. That GOD The Father, Son and Holy Ghost is One. That He is holy and calls us to be as He is. That He provides us The Means to do so, and gives us His Grace to enable this to happen through our lifetimes. That He respects the free will which He gives us. That He is longsuffering with us, always ready to forgive us our sins and renew us again by His Spirit and uplift us with His mighty loving arm. That He is full of Grace and Mercy. If this were not so, no man could be saved. Most especially a sinner such as I.

¹⁴ 6, Spurgeon Archive, “The Apostles' Creed (as usually recited today).” On GOD The Holy Ghost. <http://www.spurgeon.org/~phil/creeds/apostles.htm>. Retrieved 12/07/2007.

III. HOW I PREPARE FOR THE DAILY BATTLES OF MINISTRY

QUESTION: How do I prepare for the daily battles of ministry? First, I pray “The LORD is my Shepherd” from PSALM 23:1-6, “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His Name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in The House of The LORD for ever.”¹⁵

What does this mean for me in being pastoral? It means shepherding people as far as I can, still being true to my own Faith convictions, within their own Faith and as far as they give me permission to enter. It means being a facilitator to help mobilize the shepherding resources in the lives of people in a concrete way if allowed to do so. It means shepherding people in distress to the quiet waters of GOD’s peaceful pastures, often in words, but also often silently by being with people. And it means not forcing people into my own path as I understand The Eternal Good Shepherd.

Second, I pray “The Our Father” from MATTHEW 6:9-13, “...Our Father Which art in Heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For Thine is The Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”¹⁶

What does this mean for me in being pastoral? It means that GOD is in charge and not me. It means That GOD’s will reigns supreme and not mine. No servant is above his master. No man of faith is above The Maker. No Christian is above The Saviour. It means He has put me here in this situation now. It is my task to offer to share the daily bread of GOD’s peace that He has given me, though I receive and keep it most imperfectly, with those He has allowed me to minister to. It means that, even if I don’t see any immediate positive results of my presence, if I walk away not knowing if I’ve done my “job,” the results rest really in His Kingdom, power and glory.

Third, I pray “The Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi.” – “Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy. O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.”¹⁷

¹⁵ 3, KJV, PSALM 23:1-6.

¹⁶ 3, KJV, MATTHEW 6:9-13.

¹⁷ 5, Catholic Forum, “Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi.”

<http://www.catholic-forum.com/saints/pray0027.htm> Retrieved 12/07/2007.

What does this mean for me in being pastoral? It makes me question why I am here doing this. Such an opportunity given to me by the hand of The King of the universe, by the agency of godly and loving people who themselves are instruments of His Grace, calls me to be “other-centered.” Am I tempted to be ministered to? Then let me be a minister of His peace for others. Am I tempted to cast stones in judgement? Then let me be a channel of His love. Am I tempted to be overwhelmed by the sadness of those who suffer? Let me respect their sorrow and also point them to The Divine Master, Who desires to comfort them.

For when I console others in His Name, I find He also consoles me. When I seek to understand others as fellow children of GOD, I find He allows me to better understand myself. When I seek to give some small amount of compassion to those lost in their pain, I am reminded of The Compassion that The Lord had for me on The Cross, and am warmed by The Divine Love offered to me. As GOD has so freely given me, I pray and seek ways to give that away to others. And even when the pain of others threatens to overwhelm me, I still say, “Thank You, GOD, for allowing me to be here with these people. May I be thankful.”

IV. HOW DOES MY FAITH EFFECT THE WAY I MINISTER TO PEOPLE?

QUESTION: How does my Faith as a Christian effect the way I minister to people? If The First Great Commandment is, as our Lord cites from Moses,¹⁸ to “...love The Lord thy GOD with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind,”¹⁹ then He reminds us that The Second Great Commandment must follow – where again CHRIST cites Moses²⁰ – “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”²¹ GOD commands that we are to value the worth of all our fellow man as, and even above, ourselves. And He being The Creator of all men, if we love Him, then we must value that which He makes. Most particularly, we must therefore love our fellow man, for GOD has made us all in His Image.²²

Picture myself lying in that hospital bed as a patient. I recall in particular when I was. Or picture myself as that family member standing there with their loved one suffering, dying or dead before them. I recall in particular when I was. Or picture myself as the health care staff assigned to care for that patient, struggling to care for physical needs of people under great stress while having to pretend that the human horror – at least

¹⁸ 3, KJV, DEUTERONOMY 6:4-5, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our GOD is one LORD: And thou shalt love The LORD thy GOD with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.”

¹⁹ 3, KJV, MATTHEW 22:37.

²⁰ 3, KJV, LEVITICUS 19:17-18, “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him. Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am The LORD.”

²¹ 3, KJV, MATTHEW 22:39.

²² 3, KJV, GENESIS 1:27, “So GOD created man in His Own Image, in The Image of GOD created He him; male and female created He them.”

for the moment – was not there. I recall in particular when I was. CHRIST feels their pain and knows it completely. I enter into the lives of these afflicted and suffering people in CHRIST as His servant. If The Lord were standing there beside me, and He was to speak first, what would He say? What would he do?

I observed a hospital chaplain visiting a patient during my orientation a certain situation that touched me deeply. The chaplain knelt down on one side of the patient's bed to pray with a patient. He took the patient's hand. I went to the other side of the bed. Following his example, I also knelt down and took the patient's other hand. As he began to pray, the patient started to cry. I looked up and studied the chaplain's face as he prayed. I observed that he was also on the verge of crying, though he did not. As I closed my eyes again, I fought the burning desire to cry for and with the patient as well. Like the chaplain I was following, I also managed not to cry. When we discussed the case, I shared with the chaplain that I observed he was on the verge of tears. He asked me, "How did that make you feel?" I answered, "I felt like crying too!" He replied, "Was not JESUS CHRIST there with us crying for that patient?" Indeed He was!

So as first a Christian, as second one who has suffered and has seen my loved ones suffer, and as third one who has cared for those who have suffered, I pray to be able to enter people's trials with compassion and empathy. I can not understand completely the details of what people are themselves going through, but I can appreciate much of their distress and what it might be bringing upon them. I pray to be able to enter in as a point of strength and peace of The LORD in the midst of these swirling storms. I pray to be able to enter in tenderly and meet people where they are according to their Faith heritage and where they give me permission to go. And I pray to be able to leave these situations as having been a blessing and help in some way, and failing that, to at least have done no harm.

Under hymns for Christian ministry, the hymnal of The Moravian Church lists "Ye Who Called, Ye Who Called." Stanza 1 reminds us that, as we minister to those in need in CHRIST's Name, our Lord is caring for both those who are suffering and those who are ministering. We do not enter alone:

"Ye who called, ye who called To CHRIST's service are,
Join together, join together, Both in work and prayer;
Venture all on Him, our Lord, Who assures us in His Word,
We are always, we are always Objects of His care."²³

V. HOW DO I UNDERSTAND HUMAN SUFFERING IN RELATION TO GOD?

QUESTION: How do I understand human suffering in relation to GOD? First, GOD is not the cause of moral evil in the world. The Catechism of The Catholic Church observes, "Angels and men, as intelligent and free creatures, have to journey toward their ultimate destinies by their free choice and preferential love." That purpose is to be in a

²³ 7, Hymnal of The Moravian Church, # 290. "Ye Who Called, Ye Who Called." By "Ludolph Ernst Schlicht, 1714-1769. John Gambold, 1711-1771." Stanza 1.

mutually loving relationship with The Creator now and forever that we choose to seek. So men "...can therefore go astray. Indeed, they have sinned. Thus has moral evil... entered the world. GOD is in no way, directly or indirectly, the cause of moral evil." ²⁴ PSALM 100:5 declares, "For The LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting; and His truth endureth to all generations." ²⁵

Second, GOD allows evil to exist in creation because He respects our free will and because He knows how to bring good out of evil for His purposes for us. So The Almighty allows evil "...because respects the freedom of His creatures and, mysteriously, knows how to derive good from it." ²⁶ Saint Augustine says that "...almighty GOD..., because He is supremely good, would never allow any evil whatsoever to exist in His works if He were not so all-powerful and good as to cause good to emerge from evil itself." ²⁷

So from the greatest moral evil of all time, The Crucifixion of The Son of GOD on The Cross, "...caused by the sins of all men – GOD, by His Grace that 'abounded all the more,' brought the greatest of goods: the glorification of CHRIST and our redemption..." ²⁸ As Saint Paul declares in ROMANS 8:28, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love GOD, to them who are the called according to His purpose." ²⁹

Third, GOD Himself knows our human suffering and pain because He Himself came Incarnate to suffer and die at The Cross for us. Why? Because of His great Love for us. Saint Peter explains CHRIST's Love which caused Him to suffer for us and why in I PETER 3:18, "For CHRIST also hath once suffered for sins, The Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to GOD, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." ³⁰ When our suffering is offered up to The Lord, and it drives us to our knees to seek His face, CHRIST is always there to comfort, save and receive us. And He is there to wipe the tears from our eyes, and use us in His Name to do the same for others!

Peter continues in I PETER 5:10, "But The GOD of all Grace, Who hath called us unto His eternal Glory by CHRIST JESUS, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." ³¹ And as The Lord Himself cried with and for Lazarus and his loved ones when they were suffering in mourning, so He weeps for and with us. As Saint John records in JOHN 11:35, "JESUS wept." ³² When we stand with and over those who are suffering in His Name as His servants, there to comfort the hurting, The Presence of The LORD is there also, weeping with us and through us. We

²⁴ 8, CCC, # 311, p 92. "Providence and The Scandal of Evil."

²⁵ 3, KJV, PSALM 100:5.

²⁶ 8, CCC, # 311, p 92. "Providence and The Scandal of Evil."

²⁷ 8, CCC, # 311, p 92.

²⁸ 8, CCC, # 312, p 32.

²⁹ 3, KJV, ROMANS 8:28.

³⁰ 3, KJV, I PETER 3:18.

³¹ 3, KJV, I PETER 5:10.

³² 3, KJV, JOHN 11:35.

do not stand there alone in our own strength, but in His, to be a Presence of GOD's Peace for others.

Stanza 2 of "Ye Who Called, Ye Who Called" reminds us that, as The Lord sends us into people's suffering to minister to them in His Name – to be a center of His Presence and Peace in the midst of turmoil and trials – He shall supply us with the strength we need to do the work He sets before us:

“Showers of blessing, showers of blessing From The Lord proceed,
Strength supplying, strength supplying In the time of need;
For no servant of our King Ever lacked anything.
He will never, He will never Break the bruised reed.”³³

VI. WHAT IS MY MISSION WHEN I ENTER INTO PEOPLE'S SUFFERING?

QUESTION: What is my mission when I enter into people's suffering in ministry? The answer to this question depends also, not only on who I am and what I believe, but who the sufferer is and what he believes. It is the sufferer who determines where the chaplain may and may not tread. The chaplain at the bedside is not the Pastor, Priest or Rabbi in the pulpit. Assessing the sufferer's needs and beliefs is thus the second step in the chaplain visit, after in some way being given permission to be present with them.

Zucker et al, in "The Chaplain as an Authentic and an Ethical Presence," make a distinction between people's spiritual versus religious needs. "Spiritual" is defined as "...the experience of our souls as they engage the issues to which contemporary life exposes us."³⁴ So the chaplain's spiritual care of patients involves enabling people to share the experiences of their souls, to give those burdens and joys words in a safe space. "Religious" is defined in contrast as "...how persons understand themselves in relation to a religious [tradition]or 'faith group' ...[in the observance of] specific, primarily fixed, rituals to engage their belief systems."³⁵

Some patients desire religious care from the hospital chaplain and some do not. Others desire spiritual care from chaplains and some do not. Many patients, but not all, desire both. In all cases, the sufferer sets the parameters and agenda. The chaplain provides the opportunity as a nonjudgmental listening presence for spiritual care. If the sufferer desires when offered by the chaplain, as long as the chaplain can do so authentically and not violate his own Faith convictions, certain religious care may also be provided.

³³ 7, Hymnal of The Moravian Church, # 290. "Ye Who Called, Ye Who Called." By "Ludolph Ernst Schlicht, 1714-1769. John Gambold, 1711-1771." Stanza 2.

³⁴ 9, Zucker et al, "The Chaplain as an Authentic and Ethical Presence," p 15, paragraph 2. Introduction.

³⁵ 9, Ibid., p 16, paragraph 1. "Contrasting Religious and Spiritual."

So the answer to this question depends in part on what hat one is wearing, clergy or chaplain, and in what setting you are ministering. In the House of Worship, the clergyman sets the agenda according to The Faith tradition he serves. In the secular setting, such as the hospital, it is the sufferer who sets the agenda according to his wishes, his spiritual needs and his religious heritage – or lack thereof. The chaplain is called to meet the sufferer in the secular setting on his ground – and not the chaplain’s – as far as the chaplain may authentically enter.

What is our mission as The Lord’s ministers when we enter into people’s lives as they are hurting and in pain? To be a quiet oasis of GOD’s Grace. But we can not do this by relying on merely human agency. We must enter in by His outstretched arm, which never fails. Stanza 3 of this same Moravian hymn reads:

“Lord, have mercy, Lord, have mercy On each land and place,
Where Thy servants, where Thy servants Preach The Word of Grace;
Life and power on them bestow, Them with needful strength endow,
That with boldness, that with boldness They may Thee confess.”³⁶

VII. HOW DO I UNDERSTAND GOD WORKS THROUGH ME AS HIS SERVANT?

QUESTION: How do I understand GOD to be working through me as His servant in this ministry? First, that there is no place or time within or outside of creation that GOD is not present and immanent. Therefore second, that GOD is fully aware of every situation I enter into in ministry – before, during and after – for Him simultaneously. So third, GOD knows the needs of everyone in every way in every case that he sends me into – the patients, the families, the hospital staff and myself.

And though I am aware that most people see the chaplain in some way representing GOD’s Presence, I do not see myself so much that, but rather as pointing people to seek GOD out as they understand Him. When anyone seeks The LORD, He answers. When anyone prays for himself or for others, The Almighty hears. In distress, most people in some way cry out to GOD. He does not however always answer as we would wish and in our time. But He prepares the hearts, minds and souls of people – include myself – before I enter into a situation. He is there guiding people to Himself in the midst of such situations.

And even when I may feel my time with people has given no comfort or accomplished anything good – even when I do not know the “right” things to say or do and worse, perhaps say and do the “wrong” things – GOD is there after I leave, working in people’s lives. Therefore I do the best I can. The results are in GOD’s hands. But He works through us His servants. He calls us to be faithful and careful in what we say and do. To choose carefully and prayerfully how we enter into people’s lives. To weep in sorrow within our souls, as does JESUS Himself, with those who weep in sorrow. But to

³⁶ 7, Hymnal of The Moravian Church, # 290. “Ye Who Called, Ye Who Called.” By “Ludolph Ernst Schlicht, 1714-1769. John Gambold, 1711-1771.” Stanza 3.

also weep in joy within ourselves that GOD is there with us and working through us because of His great Love for us. Stanza 4 of “Ye Who Called, Ye Who Called” says:

“May we faithful, may we faithful In our service be,
Truly careful, truly careful In our ministry;
Keep us to Thy Church fast bound, In The Faith preserve us sound,
Often weeping, often weeping Grateful tears ‘fore Thee!”³⁷

VIII. HOW DO I DEFINE A SUCCESSFUL MINISTRY MINISTRY VISIT?

QUESTION: How do I define a successful ministry visit? That depends upon the parameters of measurement, and if my emphasis is on “doing” for people, “being” with people or a combination of both. I can think of several: 1. the spiritual box; 2. the religious box; 3. the just-being-present box; 4. the let-me-mobilize-your-support-resources box; 5. the let-me-give-you-information box. It is the case that does not allow me to check off any of these boxes that causes me to worry, often I think unduly, if I have been a help in any way to people. In this case, I have one last box:

6. the hopefully-at least-I-did-no-harm box.

The Spiritual Box: If patients or family are comfortable enough to share with me even just the basics of what is going on - “What brought you into the hospital?” – I view the visit as a success. I find this often opens up to people sharing their hopes, fears, concerns and trials. I find patients and families are often looking for the chance to “tell their story” to some one who will not interrogate and judge them. The struggles and aspirations of the soul in dealing with life’s battles needs an outlet to express itself. Making people feel comfortable doing this is a successful chaplain visit.

The Religious Box: The results of my visits with people in my heart is that they experience The Divine in some way that is part of my understanding and Faith heritage. Even though I consider these two things in me very wide and ecumenical, I realize this is part of my own very human and limited religious box. I am aware that my professional duty is to help people experience The Divine, if they desire, on their terms and within their understanding and Faith heritage – not mine.

But when it seems at present that we can not check off any combination of these caring boxes, there is one further box: 7. the “GOD-is-in-charge” box. The LORD is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. We am not. He sees the big picture in people’s lives. We do not. He is sovereign and in control of all things. We are not. Even when a visit seems a pointless failure to us in the present with those who are suffering, we may trust in Divine Providence. Vatican Council I states, “By His Providence, GOD protects and governs all things which He has made...”³⁸ For above all of The LORD’s creations

³⁷ 7, Hymnal of The Moravian Church, # 290. “Ye Who Called, Ye Who Called.” By “Ludolph Ernst Schlicht, 1714-1769. John Gambold, 1711-1771.” Stanza 4.

³⁸ 8, CCC, # 302, p 89-90. “GOD Carries Out His Plan: Divine Providence.”

in value before His eyes is man, whom He has made in His own Image and desires that we be remade in His Likeness.³⁹

IX. IN CONCLUSION

I began with definitions of key words: “theology, pastoral, chaplain.” Those who minister in GOD’s Name are not only those found behind the pulpit of Churches. We may make any mission field a chapel of worship to GOD and place of ministry in His Name to those in need. As a Christian, a sound place to start in pinning down one’s theological convictions are the ancient Church Creeds, such as The Apostles’ Creed. So that is where I begin. As a Catholic Christian, I look to The Holy Scriptures, The Word of GOD. I look to The Catechism of The Catholic Church. I look to The Catholic Church herself. And I stand in awe of The Almighty and all He has done for men, all of which flow from His great Love for us!

I then ask and try to answer some very basic questions on how the theological convictions of my Faith actually work in ministering to the suffering. How do I prepare for the daily battles of ministry? With fervent prayer. How does my Faith affect the way I minister to people? Whatever else it does and does not do, all that we do in ministry must be a reflection and giving back of The Divine Love which The Almighty has for us. How do I understand human suffering in relation to GOD? When men weep, so also JESUS weeps over and with us. We enter into the lives of suffering people in His Name as His servants. Therefore, somewhere within us, we should also weep over and with those who are suffering.

The greatest moral evil of all the ages was The Crucifixion of The Son of GOD on The Cross. But from this GOD brings forth our salvation. The LORD brings forth good from evil, even when we can not see beyond the immediate situation He sends us into. And through The Cross, GOD Himself is intimately familiar with our human suffering. When we enter into people’s suffering in GOD’s Name, He equips us with all these comforts, that we might offer them in His compassion to the people He sets before us. If GOD can do all these things, then He can certainly bring good out of the evil of people’s suffering that He calls us to care for as chaplains – even when we don’t see any immediate good in bad situations.

How does GOD work through us as His servants? Many people see chaplains as representing a Divine Presence. We minister in His Name, even when His Name is not spoken in words. Often GOD’s Name is spoken more powerfully than any human words can convey in deeds of compassion. Where should we then point people first, but to GOD Himself? What is a successful chaplain visit? It may be in spiritual and religious care given. It may be in just being present with people in the midst of their trials. And even when we are not sure if our work has been a help in some way to people, we may still always trust in His Providence.

³⁹ 3, KJV, GENESIS 1:26, “And GOD said, Let Us make man in Our Image, after Our Likeness...”

X. REFERENCES

1. "Webster's Dictionary of The English Language - Based on the Classic Edition of The Random House Dictionary." Gramercy Books of Random House, Inc. New York, New York and Avenel, New Jersey. 1983.
2. "Greek New Testament." Bible Works 7. Bible Works, LLC. Norfolk, Virginia. 2006.
3. "King James Version [Bible]." Bible Works 7. Bible Works, LLC. Norfolk, Virginia. 2006.
4. "American Dictionary of The English Language - Facsimile First Edition." Noah Webster, LLD. S. Converse. New York, 1828. 9th Edition. Reprinted by Foundation For American Christian Education, San Francisco, CA, 1996.
5. "The Catholic Community Forum." The Catholic Community Forum and Liturgical Publications of St. Louis, Inc. Jelsoft Enterprises, Ltd. 2000-2007.
<http://www.catholic-forum.com/>
6. "The [Charles] Spurgeon Archive." Phillip R. Johnson. 2001.
<http://www.spurgeon.org/mainpage.htm>
7. "Hymnal and Liturgies of The Moravian Church." The Provincial Synods of The Moravian Church in America. Rayner Lithographing Co., Chicago, Illinois. 1969.
8. "Catechism of The Catholic Church." United States Catholic Conference. Doubleday of Random House, Inc. New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Auckland. 1995.
9. "The Chaplain as an Authentic and an Ethical Presence." David J. Zucker, T. Patrick Bradley, Bonita E. Taylor. Chaplaincy Today, Volume 23, Number 2, Autumn/Winter, 2007, p 15-24.