

Reflections on Presentations at ACT Conferences

What we gain from coming together.

The 2003 International ACT Conference

The Physicians/Dentists Group, the Nurses Group, and The Allied Health Group met together as “The Body Group” for 90 minutes two consecutive days. Their thoughts and reflections were captured and collated and formatted into a statement that reflects the thinking of these members who are concerned with ministering to the physical body.

Introduction

We are the caretakers of the body; when we care for the ill we want to do so for all the aspects of self, the end product is wholeness, achieving the fullness of truth. As we have followed a path towards maturity we have overcome many challenges and we still face many roadblocks. Dealing with tragedy as students leaves a scar that often is not healed until a spiritual experience, such as occurs when we encounter other members of ACT, takes away the sadness. Evil is present. We need to recognize it and to reject it. The attack of secular medicine on spirituality remains a key current issue. We were often not taught about death and dying. Respect of the body – live and dead – needs to be practiced, remembering the Resurrection of the Body. We have problems of limitation of time that hinder our work. We need to know where our patients are in their journey to help guide their treatment. Thankfully, some patients pray for support of their caretakers, and we are grateful for that kindness.

Our Identity

Journeying through the stages of faith (love, life) we optimally find freedom through the relationship with the Trinity and become fully human and fully alive. The healing of our woundedness comes from our understanding of the Trinity, the Triune God. If we can explain, it the healing begins and the gift that we receive is to come back into the presence of God. We find our true identity by being made in the image

and likeness of the Triune God. The concept of the Trinity as One is difficult to understand. We have individual perceptions of the Trinity and we change those perceptions as we proceed through life.

Initially we identify with one person of the Trinity. Most often as a child we learn of Jesus; children see Jesus and heaven much differently than adults do. One part of the Trinity can be illusive, especially the Father, which for many is the hardest concept to grasp. God is our Parent-tree like the aspens (where a whole grove springs from but a single tree - all sharing the same DNA). Christ is the conduit between the Father and us, and He promised the Paraclete to be with us. We get in touch with the Spirit to take care of the physical needs of the temple (the body) in all of its aspects. Like the Trinity we are called to community. When we personalize we address Father, Son, Spirit. We begin to understand that the Father is Creator and we are His children, that Jesus is the Messenger of love – the way, the truth, and the light, and that the Spirit has the Mind of Christ. The Trinity; Jesus is Body, Father is Mind, Holy Ghost is Spirit.

Stages of Spirituality

Themes come out of our sharing of our faith journeys. We all share the common experience of progressing through those stages. The Church left us at an early age, often affecting our faith experiences. We are aware that God was with us during all of that time, because we are here today. It's a personal journey through the stages, cycles of dieing to self (and going through the aging process) and it's not fun! It's exhausting for us (and for those around us!). This process can be used as an offering, a sacrifice. Suffering in us can bring us closer to Jesus and help us to relate to others. We can offer up our physical pain to Christ's suffering. We develop a perspective of how to relate to our patient's illness and how we relate to them. Witnessing to others can be a blessing to them. God is with us and will lift us up.

Our Quest

While academics separate, we have to integrate the Trinity as parent, adult, and child in us. Being present with the Trinity is crucial. We each have experienced conversion experiences that continue to happen at deeper levels. Jesus has revealed to us an image of suffering through the Trinity – similar as our experiences as parents. We embody these in our profession. As a result of this, and God's presence, we continue to receive the strength and grace to be present to others as God's healers, remembering, "Our peace we give to you". Ultimately we understand

and experience God the Father as Love, Christ as Embodiment of Service, and the Holy Spirit as Comfort. With growing spirituality and a closer relationship with the Trinity we gain strength to persevere and to minister. Thanks be to our Triune God!

The 2004 International Conference

At the international meeting in 2004 our group again joined with the Nurses and Allied Health groups to discuss presentations pertaining how we continue our walk with Jesus as we continue with our daily schedules. Following is the guidance they suggested.

Be yourself and realize God places us where He wants us to be. Be sensitive to the needs and beliefs of others. Remember that it begins with Jesus in us as we model our faith. Comfortably share your daily activities, including matters of faith. Wear a symbol of your faith, which might lead others (patients & coworkers) to ask for prayer or discuss spiritual or personal matters.

Some may mock you as you model your faith but you may later be asked for spiritual input. See your work as your ministry. Consider a spiritual assessment of your client. Don't be afraid to offer prayer to your patient after you've determined your patient's openness to prayer.

Most people would be happy that a Christian physician would pray with them. Sometimes the patient/client says they "feel the presence of peace" after the prayer. If a provider is spirit-led, they will discern if the patient is open to prayer. If so, it usually results in a good experience for both.

A common thread, if pursuing some spiritual disciplines produced a sense of peace and a deeper knowledge of who we are as individuals. These practices may strengthen relationships with each other and make one's relationship with God more natural, free, and lead to a more structured commitment in spiritual life. The outcome could be a more simplified life and the ability to walk with Jesus daily. Concrete examples of spiritual disciplines felt to be leading us to greater growth and maturity in Christ are: frequent Eucharist, periods of silence and listening, perpetual adoration, contemplation, being renewed in one's Christian faith. Other disciplines mentioned are: spiritual books and readings, an attitude of appreciation of God's creation, and sharing with a prayer community.