

Community Circles

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Healing Prayer: Fact or Fantasy? with Rev. Chris Kell

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Opening ourselves to be channels of divine healing requires humility. Although we may have strong ideas about what we want to happen, and these ideas may be good, we must let the mysterious power of God come through us without being able to know or control exactly what form healing might take. Even though so much about healing prayer is out of our control, the power is real. We are all invited to be channels of divine healing for others and for the world. If we open up to do so, much healing can happen . . . especially when we unite in doing this collectively. Society itself and human culture can undergo profound transformation and healing as more people join together in praying for collective wholeness and well-being, not only for ourselves but for the planet.

~ Marcelle Martin, in her blog *A Whole Heart*

1. Rev. Alastair McCollum of St. John the Divine Anglican Church tells us that in the Christian faith, and in many other spiritual traditions, prayer is a way of being: being in the moment, being present, being open. Prayer is a recognition of being alive and being human. It is one of the most ancient expressions of belief in a power greater than ourselves. From its primitive beginnings to contemporary expression, prayer conveys a human desire to enter into personal dialogue with the sacred.

For some, prayer will mean specific sacred words; for others, it may be a more informal talking or listening to a higher power. Spanish mystic St. Teresa of Avila describes it as *an intimate friendship, a frequent conversation held alone with the Beloved.*

For others, prayer may be a “going within” that does not actively seek a conversation with the divine. For example, Fr. Richard Rohr sees prayer as an internal process bringing us closer to an experience of the divine. He writes *“I am increasingly convinced that the word “prayer,” which has become a functional and pious thing for believers to do, was meant to be a descriptor and an invitation to inner experience. When spiritual teachers invite you to “pray,” they are in effect saying, “Go inside and know for yourself!”* Father Rohr may have been influenced in his view by Thomas Merton, who wrote *“in prayer we discover what we already have. You start where you are and you deepen what you already have, and you realize you are already there.”*

Similarly, theologian Margaret Miles has described prayer as “a habit of interior attentiveness, an activity that creates a formerly unknown self.”

How do you define prayer? How did you reach this understanding?

2. Healing prayer is a form of intercessory prayer in which we ask the divine for relief of illness, injury, or some dis-ease of the body or mind, usually based on some type of religious belief system held by the sick person and/or by the person praying. Spiritual healing is a direct interaction between the healer or pray-er, and a second individual, the person being prayed over, with the intention of bringing about an improvement in the second person’s condition.

How do you define healing prayer?

Do you believe healing prayer is effective? Why or why not?

3. So, obviously, the purpose of healing prayer is for the person being prayed for to get well. And what does that mean? Well, physical healing of course, the return of the body to good health and well-being. But are there other types of healing involved? The answer is yes. Healing encompasses a broad range of positive outcomes, including a person’s emotional, spiritual, and psychological outlook as well as the health of the physical body.

What positive outcomes have you or someone you know experienced through healing prayer?

4. Pope Benedict XVI teaches us that: *It is faith that saves human beings, re-establishing them in their profound relationship with God, themselves, and others . . .* At its core, prayer is about faith.

Do you believe that faith play a part in healing prayer? Is healing prayer dependent upon the faith of the healer as well as the person being healed?

5. A spiritual healer is primarily concerned with a way of being and allows divine consciousness to express itself through the healer to the inner levels of the person being prayed for. Spiritual healers channel energy through themselves, directing it to the body, mind, and spirit and re-energizing patients to start the healing process at a level deep inside. The spiritual gift of healing is one of the charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit, originally given to the Apostles to help them fulfill their mission.

Where do you believe this energy comes from, and who is actually doing the healing?

Do you believe spiritual healing is a charismatic gift from God, by whatever name called?

6. Although some healers go through a training process, many develop their healing gifts on their own. Whether or not you have the charismatic gift of healing, you can still offer meaningful and expectant healing prayers through your relationship with the Divine and the authority that gives you. Any caring person can develop a certain amount of healing ability through meditation, prayer, and practice.

Do you believe anyone can develop the gift of healing? What is your experience around this question?