Teacher Background

Jesus as Caring Teacher

The Gospels are unanimous in portraying Jesus as a person who cared for others. Jesus was a caring teacher. Jesus’ teaching ministry was an expression of his care for others. When Jesus taught his disciples how to pray, addressing God as “Father”, he manifested his concern that people come to know the real nature of God as a loving parent, a provident God, a divinity who sought to bring about justice, forgiveness and reconciliation. God understood as Abba, Father, is a God who wants all humans, who are created in the divine image, to love, to share, to be just, to forgive to reconcile and thus to bring about the reign of God in the world. Jesus’ teaching was both realistic and hopeful. His teaching exposed and challenged injustice and oppression, but provided a way forward and a word of hope for an oppressed people. Jesus, who is proclaimed in John’s Gospel as the Way, the Truth and the Life, taught by example - manifesting in his own life, death and resurrection both the cost, the power and the hope of a life poured out in caring for others.

The teaching ministry of the Church carried out in the context of family, parish, groups of the faithful and in educational institutions at primary, secondary and tertiary levels, strives to give continuing witness in a caring way to the ministry of Jesus the caring teacher. In whatever context this Christian ministry of teaching occurs, whether formal or informal, the caring witness of the person who teaches is crucial. Whether the teacher is parent, clergy, fellow Christian or professional educator or teacher, the model must be Christ himself. This challenges the one who teaches and indeed the contexts and institutions within which that teaching is provided, to manifest Christian love in both word and action through a passion for justice; a willingness to forgive and reconcile; and to share and engender Christian hope for the reign of God in the world.

Jesus as Caring Healer

The Gospels record Jesus as travelling the length and breadth of Palestine healing lepers, restoring sight to the blind, enabling the crippled to walk, forgiving sin and casting out demons. Jesus was a healer who sought to care for and heal the person with the disease as well as healing the disease itself. Today, we would say that Jesus’ approach to his ministry of healing was a holistic one. Since the time of Jesus to our own day, the Church, through its communities and institutions, has sought to follow Jesus in his ministry of healing. The New Testament Scriptures record the apostles as healing, forgiving and reconciling in the name of Jesus. As Christian communities grew in size, the apostles ordained deacons to assist them in caring for those in need. Anointing of the sick as an expression of caring and healing in the name of Christ was already known in the New Testament Church. Care for orphans and widows expressed Christian concern for the marginalised and the vulnerable. Down the centuries, the Church, through its sacramental ministry of forgiveness, reconciliation and healing, manifested the healing ministry of Christ. Modern hospitals find their origins in arrangements made by Christian communities and religious orders to care for the sick, the frail and the aged.

In modern times, the church carries out its Christ-centred ministry of caring and healing in both formal institutional ways and in less formal ways. Catholic hospitals are an institutional expression of the caring, healing ministry of Jesus. Organisations like Centacare continue to minister to the vulnerable of society, whether such vulnerability arises through economic, psychological or domestic circumstances, or some combination of these. The Society of St Vincent de Paul provides relief to those suffering economic and social disadvantage. Caritas and Catholic Missions provide relief and advocacy on behalf of vulnerable and oppressed people around the world. In Catholic parishes around the world, the sick are visited, the troubled counselled and supported and sinners reconciled. All this is a continuation of the ministry of Jesus, the caring healer.