ST. ALOYSIUS NOVENA OF GRACE 2023

Bandage: You Have Healed Me

Materials at hand : A few packaged bandages or some gauze and tape, a candle as a prayer focus.

CENTERING (Suggested opening prayer— or your own) : (Light the candle and say with your hands spread open:)

Loving God, Creator of all that is, here I am— today, in this place,

with all the senses You have given me. Help me to use them to experience You more deeply.

You are present everywhere around me; open me to know more of the many ways

that Your goodness surrounds me. Thank you for this time to be with You and to listen to You. Amen.

SAVORING (Senses at Work):

Look at the bandages (or the material for them) before you. Think of all the times you have gotten hurt and needed one of these, perhaps especially as a child, and how someone helped you when you needed it. Consider, too, all the people who may be injured in various parts of the world — whether through war or just daily accidents— who may not have access to the health care we too often take for granted **.**

Now touch the bandaging supplies before you, after predicting what your fingers will experience. Feel the various textures involved, from the stickiness of the tape or adhesive strip to the softness of the gauze or the pad on the adhesive strip. Listen to the noise that the wrappers may make, wrappers that are there to keep the bandages clean and sterile till needed. If you can spare it, open an adhesive strip and slowly put it on your skin, experiencing it as though for the first time.

As you look at the bandages before you, take some time to consider also the many ways in which you have been hurt *inside* , wounds that don't show on the outside or leave a visible scar and therefore are more subtle. Maybe those wounds involve how you have been treated or spoken to or regarded by others; perhaps they include your disappointments with others as they fell short of what you expected of them. Then consider how this inner wounding has happened for others as well.

Whether the "owies" are on the outside and visible, needing a bandage or on the inside where they can't be seen, healing them can take a long time.

LISTENING (The Word of God):

Listen to one or more of these passages as you watch the candle play across the bandages:

[Jer 30:12, 17] For thus says the LORD: Your hurt is incurable, your wound is grievous.... [But] I will restore health to you, and your wounds I will heal, says the LORD....

[Psa 147:2-3] The LORD builds up Jerusalem; he gathers the outcasts of Israel. He heals the brokenhearted, and binds up their wounds.

[Luke 10:30-37] Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.' Which of these three, do you think, was

a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

[1 Pet 2:24] [Jesus] himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

[Mark 6:56] And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were heal

[Psa 30:2] O LORD my God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me.

CONSIDERING (Time to Reflect):

The way the body heals is nothing less than amazing. When we cover a wound with a bandage, we are just protecting it while the body does the healing. Somehow it knows just what is needed to heal what was injured and return to full health again. As a wound begins to heal, it does so through what scientists call granulation, and the body forms the fibrous tissue that we later call a scar. The potential complications in this healing process are too great a loss of blood or a possible infection; thus the need for a bandage.

Before modern medical knowledge people often relied on folk remedies to promote healing. For example, in Europe and America in the 17 th and 18 th centuries cobwebs from the cellar spider were often used as bandages to help stop bleeding from wounds, and many medicines were based on herbs and plants.

Jesus certainly knew about healing **;** wherever he went he healed the sick as a sign of the fuller spiritual healing and love that he had come to announce, and people flocked to him for that healing presence. Just like those who sought him out, we all long for healing in our lives, whether we know it or not.

RESPONDING (So what?):

The book of Ecclesiastes tells us, " For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: .... a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; ....a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to throw away; ...." [Eccl 3:1,3,6] Is this a time to heal in my life, and if so from what? Are there any old "wounds" that I haven't let go of which keep getting in the way of my ability to fully enjoy my life and the freedom of God's love? Healing God, please help me forgive all those who may have hurt me or others around me and help me to feel your healing love.

Bless all those who are sick, especially those whose conditions are life-threatening; bless those who help care for the sick or wounded and those who make the bandages and all the supplies needed to care for them. Please bless and help heal those who suffer from "wounds" that may not be visible, especially from all kinds of abuse. And please help us understand better how to "heal" the problems between countries and groups through tools like mediation and reconciliation.

God of Love, thank You for Your healing love; help me remember it whenever I see a bandage. Amen.

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