# HIV/AIDS And The Mission To Heal

# Challenges For The Clergy By Fr Stuart Bate OMI

## PART 1

# Understanding the Context

## Challenge 1: To Recognize The Social And Religious Dimensions Of HIV/AIDS

- The sheer scale of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, its danger to human life and our apparent inability to cure it makes it a social and religious matter,
  - □ Social because it affects all areas of society: from the family to nation
  - □ Religious because it concerns human limitation in life and death
- Society is profoundly divided into groups with a whole series of different views, values and beliefs about HIV and AIDS.
  - □ Some deny that HIV causes AIDS.
  - Some deny that AIDS is incurable and claim to have cured it.
  - Some say that there is no such thing as AIDS calling it an invention of scientists and pharmaceutical companies
  - Some say that AIDS is God's punishment for evil.

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### Why is HIV/AIDS different?

- The main reason is that AIDS affects so many different aspects of our human life. It is a matter of:
  - □ life and death,
  - □ sickness and health, medicines and no medicines,
  - □ jobs and unemployment, wealth and poverty, politics and power,
  - □ spirits and witches, sin and evil, ethics and morality.
- HIV is a virus, but issues around HIV/AIDS are far wider than the medical ones.
- Our response to AIDS reveals who we are as human beings.
- It reveals the real truths, beliefs and values of our society.
- Stigma, silence and denial show we are sicker than we first thought and that our sickness is far more profound than we realized.

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### How To Make An Authentic Response

- We must search for an organic cure
- Healing HIV/AIDS must also be a response to the human sickness the pandemic generates
- The healing that heals our humanity is Cultural and Religious healing.
  - Cultural because it affects our values and way of life
  - □ Religious because it effects our deepest beliefs about life, death and human limitation: our deepest truths.

### Challenge 2: To Understand The Cultural Dimension Of Illness And Healing

- In the field of medical anthropology both illness and healing are CULTURAL CONSTRUCTS.
- Illness is defined as "the psycho social experience and meaning of perceived disease...the shaping of disease into behaviour and experience ...created by personal, cultural and social reactions to disease" (Kleinman 1980:72).
- Healing is seen as the psycho-cultural construction of well-being as a result of the application of effective remedies by the healer.

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## The Human Experience of Illness and Healing

- The first experience of illness: I FEEL unwell.
- This feeling is a cultural construct since culture affects:
  - Perception of the illness: The way the illness enters my world (symptoms)
  - □ Cognition of the illness: the labels I give to the experience
  - The value of the illness. What this means in terms of my value system
  - The emotion generated by the illness.

### The totality of this experience allows me to

- identify the illness and thus
- □ clarify the remedy.

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### The Local Remedy

- The remedy will also be conditioned by my culture on the same four levels: perception, cognition, value and emotion
- I use the easiest remedy that will work: starting with those available in my local family or community context

Illness	Remedy
Headache	Aspirin
Umkhuhlane	Umuthi
Possession by evil spirits	Casting out evil spirits
Psychological	Therapy
Ukuthakatha	Traditional healing remedy

But if this doesn't work I must look for a more powerful remedy to feel well

### More Powerful Local Remedies

- If the illness continues I go onto the next level:
- the local cultural healing service:
  - □ clinic/nurse/doctor (West)
  - □ nyanga/nganga/ngaka (ATC)
  - umkhokeli, umprofeti, umthandazi (Township)
  - □ priest/holy person (Catholic, Hindu, Religious)
- But if this doesn't work I must look for a more powerful remedy to feel well

### More Powerful Distant Cultural Remedies

- If illness continues I go onto the next level:
- a more distant cultural healing service
  - ☐ Hospital (West)
  - □ Distant well known nyanga/nganga/ngaka (ATC)
  - □ Distant well known umkhokeli, umprofeti, umthandazi (Township)
  - Special healing place (e.g. Lourdes, Ganges) or holy person (Catholic, Hindu,)
- But if this doesn't work I must look outside my culture for a more powerful remedy to feel well

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### Powerful Remedies Outside My Culture

- If illness continues then my culture cannot heal it.
- I look for other healers OUTSIDE my own experience/ culture: cross the cultural healing boundary:
- With this step I begin the CONVERSION to another world-view or let another world view into mine.
- If these heal me. I will CONVERT to this world view: i.e. bring it into mine as it is seen as more powerful than mine
  - ATC to Christianity in colonial period
  - □ mainline and ATC to AIC's
  - Westerners to Buddhism. Hare Krishna and other especially eastern religions
  - Secular Westerners to alternative healing: homeopathy, holistic health, chiropracty etc

### The AIM

is

**ALWAYS** 

To

FEEL WELL

### Challenge 3: To Recognise Local Cultural Systems Of Sickness And Health

- To understand Religious and Cultural healing we need to acknowledge the power of different cultural systems of illness and health.
- There are many of these but here I will present just three which influence Southern African society, particularly in urban and peri-urban contexts (i.e. the vast majority)
- I will present them as cultural models of sickness and health to see how similar kinds of illnesses are experienced, labelled, categorised and understood in different ways.

## Medical Healing Cultural Source: Modern Western Culture

- HEALING IS: Curing Organic Disease Clinically
- PRINCIPAL SIGN OF ILLNESS: Disease
  - □ Clinically diagnosable source of organic dysfunction.
- PRINCIPAL REMEDY: The cure
- CUTURAL WORLDVIEW: The world is material and particular.
  - ☐ It is observable, measurable, and controllable using the scientific method
- CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING OF SICKNESS AND HEALTH:
  - all sickness must be objectively verified by clinical diagnosis and cured by remedies, identified by experimentation, leading to verifiable, repeatable solutions
- CULTURAL LIMITATION: Illness not revealed by the method is not illness and cures which are not verifiable by the method are not cures. Some Diseases are incurable (because medical science has not yet found the cure)

#### Neo-Pentecostal Healing.

(Also Influences AIC)

Cultural Source: Urban Christian Pentecostal Culture

- HEALING IS: Casting Out Demons Of Sickness
- PRINCIPAL SIGN OF ILLNESS: Demons and Evil Spirits
- PRINCIPAL REMEDY: Healing as God's direct intervention
- CULTURAL WORLDVIEW: The world is God's creation which he continues to control directly
  - □ Jesus came to bring us salvation and healing as a spiritual reality which is available to all who believe in him.
- CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING OF SICKNESS AND HEALTH:
  - All sickness is spiritual in nature. Evil spirits continue to tempt us and possess us when we do not live by the power of Christ. God continues to work miracles of healing today through Jesus.
- CULTURAL LIMITATION: Faith is necessary for healing.



Cultural Source: Rural Zulu Tradition

- HEALING IS: Restoring the fullness of life
- PRINCIPAL SIGN OF ILLNESS: Ukungaphili kahle (lit.: not to live well)
- PRINCIPAL REMEDY: Ukuphilisa/ukuzilungisa. (lit.: to bring life or order). Restoring life by dealing with damaged relationships.
- CULTURAL WORLDVIEW: Humanity is at the centre of the world. Humanity is being-in-community understood as relatedness between peoples both living and living dead. Living well (health) is a sign that the cosmic order of relatedness is in harmony.

## African Traditional Healing (Also Influences AIC)

Cultural Source: Rural Zulu Tradition

CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING OF SICKNESS AND HEALTH: All sickness is relational in nature.

Divination must discover WHO is the cause.

The remedy consists in dealing with those concerned (restoring family relationships, appeasing ancestors, removing witches, redirecting harmful medicines back to their human source etc.)

LIMITATION: Relationships are basically familial.

## PART 2

Constructing **A Local Theology** Which Could Inform A Healing Ministry In Urban African Contexts

## Essential Components of a Local Theology

- A Theological Anthropology
  - □ This incarnates the theology in the local context and culture
- A Biblical Theology
  - □ This roots the theology in the Scriptures
- An Ecclesiology
  - This roots the local theology in the tradition and teaching of the Church

### Challenge 4:

### To Construct A Theological Anthropology Based On Local Cultural Models Of Sickness And Health

Healing by casting out demons of sickness helps us to recognise the existence of powerful forces which seem to transcend human limitation and the need to call on the power of God in our interventions. The power of evil can be defeated.

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### Challenge 4:

### To Construct A Theological Anthropology Based On Local Cultural Models Of Sickness And Health

- Curing Organic disease clinically helps us to see the power of humanity to find effective scientific solutions to problems and helps us not to be afraid of what may seem overwhelming.
- Healing by restoring the fullness of life helps us to see the importance of human relatedness and the importance for all of the well-being of the suffering.

## This Leads To A Very Wide Theology Of Healing Which Includes:

- Casting out demons, understood as evil powers which appear to transcend human limitation, by faith in the effective power of God.
- Curing disease by the power of human ingenuity and wisdom to find effective scientific solutions to problems.
- Restoring the fullness of life to the whole of humanity by recognising the centrality of human relatedness and the importance for all of the well-being of the suffering.
- Such a wide definition is much better in restoring healing/saving to the centre of Christian praxis as it was in the mission of Jesus and the apostles.

### Challenge 5:

## To Construct A Biblical Theology From The Example Of Jesus And The Apostles

#### A. The Mission of Jesus

- Jesus comes to witness the KOG (Mk 1:15)
- Done in three principal ways
  - Preaching Good news especially through the parables
    - KOG is like...)
  - ☐ The Healings (41 in NT)
  - The struggle with evil in the passion and death of Jesus.
- Healing is central to Jesus mission

### Challenge 5: To Construct A Biblical Theology From The Example Of Jesus And The Apostles

#### A. The Mission of Jesus

- He missions his disciples to do the same as he does (Mt. 10)
- Healing thus seems central to Christianity.

### B. The Biblical Notion Of Healing In The Ministry Of Jesus

- Three principal Greek terms used for healing work of Jesus.
- iasthai (iάσθαι), is the first of these.
  - It refers to the kind of healing done by a physician (iatros: ίατρός)
  - ☐ (It appears 17x gospels especially in Luke)

### B. The Biblical Notion Of Healing In The Ministry Of Jesus

- Sozo (σώζω) is the second.
   It also means to save, rescue or maintain integrity;
   It always refers to the whole person not individual members of the body.
   (It appears 16x for healing in Gospels and 35 X in a less clinical sense for other forms of saving.).
  - It is based on Aramaic term with 2 fold meaning: make alive and make healthy. Saving and healing are thus part of the same process.
    - This is very close to the notion of "ukuphilisa" in Zulu
- Therapeuo (θεραπεύω). Is the third and the most common term.
  - It is used in Gospels in the "sense of to heal and always in such a way that the reference is not to medical treatment which might fail but to real healing
  - (33x for healing in Gospels. Often poorly translated "curing" in English.).

## C. The Disciples Are Sent On Mission (Matthew 10)

Mt. 10: 1

He called his twelve disciples

He gave them authority

over unclean spirits to cast then out

 and to heal every disease vóσον

noson

and every sickness

vocation

Power, Spirit,

έκβάλλειν

θεραπεύειν πασαν

Therapeuein pasan

και πασαν μαλακίαν Kai pasan malakian

Mt. 10: 7-8

And as you go,

preach that the Kingdom of heaven is close at hand

heal the sick (ailing ones) άσθενούντας θεραπεύετε

Asthenountas therapaeuete

received in Zulu as:

philisani abagulayo bring life to the ailing ones

raise the dead

νεκρούς έγείρετε

Nekros egeirete

cleanse the lepers

cast out demons.

δαιμόνια έκβάλλετε Daimonia ekballete

### D. A Procedure In The Early Church

- Anyone who is ill should send for the elders (πρεσβυτέρους) of the church and they must anoint the person with oil in the name of the Lord and pray over him.
- The prayer of faith will save/heal (σώσει) the sick person and the lord will raise him up again and if he has committed any sins he will be forgiven. (James 5:14-16)

### Challenge 6: To Know And Follow Church Teaching On Healing

- To be faithful to the community we belong to it is essential that we follow its laws and teaching
- Without an ecclesiology of sickness and health we can be too attached to the conventional wisdom of the present
- This is why Jesus says I have not come to do away with the law and the prophets
- A Study of Church teaching on healing throughout its history is a statement of the Church's tradition or if you like its culture
- This is a complex and detailed matter



Here I provide a extracts from the current synthesis of this teaching in the most recent magisterial teaching

### INSTRUCTION ON PRAYERS FOR HEALING

 Source: Congregation For The Doctrine Of The Faith (Rome: 2000)

### A. Doctrinal Aspects (extracts)

■ From § 1) The messianic victory over sickness, does not happen only by its elimination through miraculous healing, but also through the voluntary and innocent suffering of Christ in his passion, which gives every person the ability to unite himself to the sufferings of the Lord.

### A. Doctrinal Aspects (extracts)

- From §2) If God's will is accepted then the sick person's desire for healing is both good and deeply human, especially when it takes the form of a trusting prayer addressed to God.
- From §2) The Church asks the Lord for the health of the sick in her liturgy.
  - Firstly there is the sacrament of Anointing of the Sick.
  - Also the Roman Missal contains a Mass for the sick...
  - In the Order of Blessings (*De benedictionibus*) of the Roman Ritual there is an Order of Blessing of the Sick in which there are various prayers for healing.

### From § 5: Prayer meetings for obtaining healing,

- It is appropriate to distinguish between meetings connected to a «charism of healing,» whether real or apparent, and those without such a connection.
- □ If there is no connection with any «charism of healing,» then the celebrations provided in the liturgical books, are obviously licit and often appropriate,
- The «charism of healing» is not attributable to a specific class of faithful.
- □ These gifts "are activated by one and the same Spirit, who distributes to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses» (1 Cor 12:11)
- In prayer meetings organized for asking for healing, it would be completely arbitrary to attribute a «charism of healing» to any category of participants, for example, to the directors of the group; the only thing to do is to entrust oneself to the free decision of the Holy Spirit, who grants to some a special charism of healing in order to show the power of the grace of the Risen Christ.
- Not even the most intense prayer obtains the healing of all sicknesses. St Paul had to learn from the Lord that «my grace is enough for you; my power is made perfect in weakness» (2 Cor 12:9)

### B. Disciplinary Norms (Extracts)

- Art. 1 It is licit for every member of the faithful to pray to God for healing. When this is organized in a church or other sacred place, it is appropriate that such prayers be led by an ordained minister.
- Art. 2 Prayers for healing are considered to be liturgical if they are part of the liturgical books approved by the Church's competent authority; otherwise, they are non-liturgical.
- Art. 3 —
- § 1. Liturgical prayers for healing are celebrated according to the rite prescribed in the Order of Blessings for the Sick of the Roman Ritual and with the proper sacred vestments indicated therein.
- § 2. Conferences of Bishops may introduce those adaptations to the Rite of Blessings of the Sick which are held to be pastorally useful or possibly necessary, after prior review by the Apostolic See.

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  - Art. 4 —
  - § 1. The Diocesan Bishop has the right to issue norms for regarding liturgical services of healing,
  - Art. 5 —
  - § 1. Non-liturgical prayers for healing are distinct from liturgical celebrations...
  - § 2. Confusion between such free nonliturgical prayer meetings and liturgical celebrations properly so-called is to be carefully avoided.

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#### Art. 6

- § 1. ... prayers for healing – whether liturgical or non-liturgical – must not be introduced into the celebration of the Holy Mass, the sacraments, or the Liturgy of the Hours.

#### Art. 7

- □ Those who direct healing services, whether liturgical or non- liturgical, are to strive to maintain a climate of peaceful devotion in the assembly and to exercise the necessary prudence if healings should take place among those present;
- when the celebration is over, any testimony can be collected with honesty and accuracy, and submitted to the proper ecclesiastical authority.

## Challenge 7: To Recognise The Theological And Ministerial Value Of A Multifaceted Healing Response To HIV/AIDS

- Therapies in the Medical culture
- Therapies based on care
- Therapies for Psychic wellness
- Therapies based on Cultural symbols
- Social and Political Therapies
- Spiritual Therapies

#### 1. Therapies In The Medical Culture

The Church would consider acceptable, all those forms of medical therapy which are not destructive of human life.

# 2. Therapies Based On Care

- People who care for others bring them hope, support, joy and the opportunity to live in human conditions and to die with human dignity.
- All of these are aspects of religious and cultural health since most care therapies are determined culturally within local communities.
- Examples include Nursing, Volunteer care programs:
   Home based care and Orphan care programs.

### 3. Therapies For Psychic Wellness

- Psychological therapies have as goal the psychic well being of the patient. There are many different kinds.
- Therapies which restore emotional wellness help a person to feel better.
- Therapies which restore cognitive well-being allow people to understand and accept their situation more realistically.
- Therapies which allow psychic integration of beliefs, values and behavior, promote a lifestyle which reinforces self identity and self esteem (May in Buhrmann note 42).

#### 4. Therapies Based On Cultural Symbols

- Rituals are one of the main ways in which culture mediates healing to people.
- Ritual healing has the ability to effect psychic and social healing for those people who accept the worldview and symbol system of the culture.

#### 4. Therapies Based On Cultural Symbols

- In a healing ritual the factors which cause sickness and those which have the power to heal are attached to cultural symbols. During the ritual process these symbols are manipulated by the cultural healer in order to effect the healing.
- Ritual healing processes also promote a sense of well-being within the community because they articulate the belief system and value system of the community.
- The Catholic Church is a Church which recognises the role of rituals in Christian life. Catholics have to examine themselves to see whether ritual healing solutions are being effectively applied to the healing of those infected and affected by serious illness like HIV/AIDS.

#### 5. Social and Political Therapies

- In one sense the greatest healers in South Africa are not charismatic healers, powerful sangomas or great medical doctors.
- They are politicians who distribute the wealth of the nations to build up health care systems.
- The Ministers of Water affairs have been responsible since 1994 for the provision of clean running water to some 10 million people who did not have it before.
- Our health ministry on the other hand has been a classic example of how politicians can exacerbate a bad situation.

### 6. Spiritual Therapies

- Spiritual therapies recognise the importance of supernatural factors in both illness etiology and healing remedies.
- Illness etiologies may be ascribed to the activity of spirits, demons or other malevolent spiritual beings as well as to immoral human behaviour usually understood as sin.

# 6. Spiritual Therapies

- Healing therapies include the casting out of demons or evil spirits, the confession and forgiveness of sin, anointing with oil, laying on of hands and prayer for the sick person.
- In the Catholic tradition there are two sacraments of healing: Penance and the Anointing of the sick. Receiving communion also has a healing effect.
- Healing practices which ignore the spiritual dimension are distorted as they deny an essential dimension of our humanity.

# CONCLUSION

- The seven challenges I have presented should help clergy to play a vital role within parishes, church institutions and in society in general.
- So accept that all serious sickness has social and religious dimensions.
- Recognise that illness and healing are themselves cultural constructs affected by the values and beliefs of people.

# CONCLUSION

- -Understand the different cultural systems of illness and healing that may be informing peoples' behaviours in your context.
- Recognise that in urban areas many of these are being fused together in a new cultural mix.
- Consider the fact that imposing our own solutions may not succeed precisely because we have refused to incarnate ourselves into the world as Jesus did.

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  - Develop a healing ministry informed by a theological anthropology which incorporates these cultural systems.
  - Develop a healing ministry based on a biblical theology which recognises the meaning and example of the healing ministry of Jesus and the apostles.
  - Develop a healing ministry that is faithful to your own Church tradition and teaching on healing since this is where God has called you to live your faith in ecclesial integrity.
  - Finally promote the theological and ministerial value of a complex and diverse healing response to HIV/AIDS since responsibility in religious and cultural healing should open us up to the value of providing therapies on many different levels and not just the medical.

- As priests, your ministry should promote specifically religious healing approaches, since religious categories respond to the limit areas of human power, where our ordinary ability to be on top of the situation is compromised.
- Praying for healing is an essential ministry
- In a time of pandemic and plague the faith, hope and love that you bring saves and heals people even when their bodies die to the disease

# **END**