

**THE HEALING MINISTRY OF JESUS, THE HEALING MISSION OF THE
CHURCH IN LAGOS: GIVE CARE AND LOVE TO THE SICK**

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the healing mission of the Church in imitation of the healing ministry of Jesus, the compassionate, loving, and gentle Master who heals the sick and the infirm. This noble act of caring for the sick and the dying is all encompassing. The church must be ready to sacrifice her time, energy, and wealth in the service of the sick in the hospital, maternity centres, and orphanages and clinics belonging to the Religious Congregations and Institutes, Diocese/Parish or State, in cooperation with the Health workers according to the circumstance. The Church makes her services available to people of every condition, but especially the poor and afflicted. In Lagos Archdiocese, the archdiocesan bishop, priests, religious, exercise responsibilities that are rooted in their respective offices to promote collaboration among health care leaders, providers, medical professionals, chaplains and other specialists. The vocation of health care professionals to share in the carrying forth God's life-giving and healing work must not lose its focus. The sick and dying must remain the "core" of our call to imitate the healing ministry of Jesus. Conscious of the delicate nature of the work and that slightest mistake may have serious repercussion, health workers should be conscientious in their duties. They should moreover observe the highest professional standards and the norm of the Christian ethics. Therefore, health care workers strive to fulfil the mandate of Jesus: "Go out to the whole world proclaim the kingdom of Heaven is close at hand. Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those suffering from virulent skin-disease, drive out devils. (Matt.10:7-9).

INTRODUCTION

"I came so that you might have life and have it more abundantly." (Jn. 10:10)

In imitation of Jesus, the Catholic Church sees health care as a continuation of Jesus' healing ministry.

The work of caring for the health of a person is a very valuable service to life. It expresses a profoundly human and Christian commitment, which is undertaken and carried out not only as a technical activity but also as one of dedication to love and

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service of neighbour. It is a form of Christian witness. The church's health care ministry also sees a human person, not just as a patient with Tuberculosis, AIDS or Cancer. This ministry is concerned with sacredness of life and its transmission and protection.

The Catholic Archdiocese of Lagos has been involved in the provision of health care for over 40 years. The inspiration for this involvement springs from Jesus' own words and actions. The gospels are full of examples of how Christ cured every kind of ailments and diseases.

This article proposes to explain the concept of health and healing, the process of getting well, the different types of healing, the healing ministry of Jesus, His Disciples and the mission of the Church -- both in the past and present.

CONCEPT OF HEALTH

Health and healing are difficult to define. However, *health* may be defined as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."² This points to a condition of satisfactory functioning of the whole organism; the words *health*, *wholeness* and *holiness* are closely linked in origin. *Healing* may, therefore, be described as the process by which a living organism, whose functions are disordered, is restored or returned to health or 'made whole,' that is to say, it returns to complete functioning; healing involves the restoration of structure and function of injured or diseased tissues. In other words, to heal is to cure of a disease or wound and restore to soundness or to that state of body in which the natural functions are regularly performed; as, to heal the sick. In the Scriptures, to *heal* also means to forgive, cure moral disease and restore soundness, restore an object (say waters) to purity; it is to purify from corruptions, redress grievances and restore to prosperity.

Healing involves an understanding of the basic types of conditions that require healing and the appropriate medicine methods by which each condition may be addressed effectively. Healing is much more than eliminating or suppressing symptoms. It is essentially a reversal of the process involved in becoming ill, and at the same time it is an awakening to one's true nature and the meaning of life. Healing involves re-integrating or bringing the members back together holistically. In short, healing is a path that can be embraced.

Holistic healing is an approach to health and wellness that takes into consideration the whole person, that is, the physical, mental /emotional, spiritual values and social lifestyle and interaction with the environment. Holistic health is based on the natural principle that the whole is comprised of inter-reliant parts, and that when one part is not functioning at optimum levels it impacts on all of the other

² World Health Organization, *Constitutions, Principles*.

parts. This healing focuses on all parts of the person, not just the physical portion where ailments are most obvious. Therefore, holistic healing goes beyond merely treating symptoms and instead uses them as a guide to address the root cause of the problem. Physical symptoms can be alleviated by taking medication, but unless the whole person is treated, the actual problem still exists.

On the physical level, healing involves following diet and a healthful lifestyles with lots of rest. It may involve changes in activities, consuming special foods, taking supplementary nutrients, and often the use of other natural therapies of various kinds. At the mental level, healing involves taking full responsibility for oneself, committing to oneself and to happiness and health, and releasing any habit, behaviour, job, persons, and attitudes or emotions that are blocking healing. It also involves discipline, forgiveness of self and so on.

THE PROCESS OF GETTING WELL

The process of getting well is a series of organised steps designed for expansion of consciousness and a new understanding of who we are. These major steps are used as tool for measuring the level of healing.

1) Emotional Healing

Most of us are driven by our emotions like fear, longing, physical desires, anger, resentment, guilt and many others. These are considered normal emotions and are even encouraged by some psychologists. Healing requires letting go of that which is not conducive to a positive emotional environment.

2) Spiritual Healing

This healing involves touching the deeper self, which is vast, powerful and mysterious. There are moments called peak experiences, ecstasy or enlightenment when the ego has somehow been put aside. While physical symptoms may be addressed along the way, the spiritual self also needs to be a focus.

3) Taking Full Responsibility

One of the most damaging attitudes of one, who wants to be healed, is that of feeling like a victim. It is extremely disempowering when one may seem to be the victim of, for example, one's upbringing, or a tumour. The healing process requires above all taking full responsibility for whatever exists in one's life, which is very empowering. If you created a mess, you can un-create it.

Taking responsibility also does not mean not accepting help, far from it. We are here to help one another awaken, and thus to heal. Taking full responsibility means respecting the sovereignty of each individual and ability of each one to make choices, not imposing their vision on others. Jesus would always ask, "Do you want to be healed?" "YES, I want to, Sir, make me well again."

Healing involves an expansion of awareness. When love is the essence of what we are, and it becomes the force that keep us going, negative energy patterns

disappear and the body heals effectively with any methods or therapies found helpful.

4) *Healers And Doctors*

Healing happens! Doctors, Nurses, therapists, ministers and counsellors facilitate the healing process, but do not cause it. Some have developed certain gifts, or are more open, in touch with their abilities and willing to share with others. Looking at a sunset, sitting under a tree, talking to a friend, taking a walk, eating a particular meal and a thousand of other experiences can also facilitate healing. Have we all not had such experience?

It is easy to become confused by laws that proclaim that only those with certain licenses or degrees may be healers. No, we need not be. For example, Jesus the ultimate healer was not a degree holder but healed all kinds of diseases and infirmity. Even some family members act as healer to the sick relation. Other laws proclaim that only certain "approved methods" can heal us. And again, Jesus applied different methods of healing approach during His healing ministry. I hope some of these laws, if they are misleading and confusing, will be repealed some day. They could obstruct the way of the process of healing. At the same time, it is necessary to ensure there are health professionals with adequate training, knowledge and competence, ethical probity, and open to welcoming and dialogue and operating with other persons who adopt other methods of healing, and thus avoiding the situation of spread of quack professionals parading themselves as healers and health care giver.

5) *Forgiveness*

This is an important principle. We all have to forgive others and to be forgiven. Learning not to judge persons is a great part of healing and forgiveness. No wonder Jesus would often use those words "go your sins are forgiven you, do not sin again." By forgiving others, we obtain forgiveness for ourselves. Self-forgiveness, in turn, frees us to finally live without guilt and fear. "Forgive us as we forgive others" is thus a powerful healing principle.

6) *Easy Cases*

If healing occurs very easily, it is perhaps not healing but it is symptom-removal, which can look like healing. Only Jesus heals instantly. Like the woman with issue of blood. She spent twelve solid years on medical intervention without healing; it was only Jesus who healed her instantly. Healing is often a more involved process that requires certain changes in most aspects of life and must touch the deepest places inside one. Healing also involves a change in attitude in almost all cases. If this does not occur, it is not the deepest healing. At times, it is very difficult to distinguish between the two.

7) *Retracing*

Deep healing always involves the process called *retracing* or healing reactions. In the case of the blind man, Jesus asked him: can you see anything? He replied, I saw something that looked like trees. Jesus revisited the situation and at last the man got his sight. Essentially, one must revisit, reframe and rework or reprocess old physical, emotional and spiritual imbalances so they are healed at the deepest levels.

TYPES OF HEALING

Healing also require another level of *commitment* on the part of the one who seeks it. There are many ways to create healing through the different types that exist around us all of the time. Let us consider the multidimensional aspect of healing.

1) *Spontaneous Healing*: Often this is an illusion as the individual has been consciously or unconsciously thinking about or taking action toward solving the problems for some period of time prior to the "healing." In most cases, while the healing may seem to occur "right now," the ground work, the work needed for it to occur, has been in process for weeks, months or even years.

2) *Medical Healing*: This implies that the individual has sought the help of a medical physician or is undergoing medical treatment programs. To do this they must consult, consent and allow medical treatment, including but not limited to the laying on of hands, receiving medical, anatomical, physiologic information, medications, surgery, physical therapy, or any other treatment or treatments considered to be "medical" in nature or usually associated with a medical treatment program.

3) *Group Healing*: In this type of healing, the individual joins a group, and a larger part of the work toward healing is based on the dynamics of the group. Simple groups like HIV/AIDS support, alcohol anonymous, cancer support, sickle cell anaemia, counselling and therapy groups.

4) *Dietary, Food Based Healing*: When healing is based principally around use of specific diet, foods, vitamin-mineral supplements or other nutrients which are used either in normal amounts or extreme dosages such as mega-vitamin therapy, all green, red, or white beach diet, elimination of certain foods or the manipulation of types and amount of food eaten such as in a low salt diet or diabetic diet.

5) *Healing At a Distance*: This comes about when healing is not through direct contact with the person who is being healed. The action is taken by others, an individual or a group, through prayer, or using "treatments" either known or unknown to the person being healed.

6) *Touch Healing*: When healing is directly associated with some form of touching, direct manipulation or handling of the “sick” person. This can be through random touch, directed or purposeful touch like massage.

7) *Faith Healing*: This kind of healing is referred to as claimed healing through supernatural or spiritual means. It can involve prayer, a visit to a religious house like Church or Chapel, or simply a strong belief in a supreme being (GOD). Ultimately healing occurs when you are ready for it to happen and when the time is right for it.

A LOOK AT JESUS AND HIS HEALING MINISTRY

The Gospels reveal to us that Jesus’ ministry was a ministry of healing. Nearly one fifth of the gospels are devoted to acts of healing with over forty recorded instances of physical and mental healing.

Why is healing so important in Jesus’ ministry? Healing is essential to the ministry of Jesus because it is His *call* and he has the *power* to perform miracles. They flow from within Him as heat from the sun, with compassion and love. He knows what He has, people sensed it, and to Him they came in droves and multitudes. Jesus welcomes the blind, crippled, leprous, even the dead people into His presence. Through his deeds, he could say, “I was eyes for the blind, and feet to the lame.” (Job 29: 15).

Jesus performed all the healings. No problem loomed too great for His skill; none intimidated Him into silence because He came as God’s healer. Jesus had compassion equal to His power. Matthew 8: 16- 17 says, “When evening came, they brought him many who were demon-possessed, and He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were ill.” This was to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: He himself bore our sicknesses away and carried our diseases. And as Matthew 14:14 says, “When He went ashore he saw a large crowd; and had pity on them and healed their sick,” and even fed them. That contrasted starkly with the disciples, who wanted the pesky crowds dispersed.

The people knowing they could receive help if only they could access and touch Him, responded to that compassion and love, in bold and unorthodox ways. The Canaanite woman struggled to meet Jesus, notwithstanding His disciples’ desire to dismiss her, and His own initial, courteous refusal to. However, Jesus answered her, “woman, you have great faith. Let your desire be granted.” And from that moment her daughter was well again. This was a combination of “faith” and “distance” healing.

The woman with a haemorrhage crept silently through the crowd to merely touch His clothes (Mark 5: 25-34) ‘If I can just touch His clothes, I shall be saved.’ After healing her, Jesus told her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well .Go in peace! Be cured from your illness. At least, Jesus credited the sufferer’s “faith” as the

means of being healed. And the crowds “begged Him to let the sick just touch the edge of His cloak,” (Matthew 14: 36), for “all who touched him were healed.”

Healing was essential to the ministry of Jesus, because He envisioned healing as a physical symbol of *forgiveness*. He guaranteed the ultimate glory of the human body through His personal resurrection, but forecast that restoration by healing twisted, shrunken, blinded limbs and organs. The paralytic’s restoration is only one of the many such examples (Mark 2:1-12). Verse 5 says, seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, my child, your sins are forgiven.

Jesus applied the *different types of healing*. According to Matthew 8:14 – 15. “When Jesus came into Peter’s house, He saw Peter’s mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever. He touched her hand and the fever left her, and she got up and began to wait on him.” It is amazing that Jesus’ healing ministry was just giving a word, a command (“doctor’s orders”). Jesus’ other miracles have occurred through mere speaking of His word. The healing is immediate; the compassion is demonstrable.

Jesus heals through touch. He heals Peter’s mother-in-law who was down with flu with just a “touch.” Jesus’ touching the leper is also significant, since such contact rendered Him ceremonially unclean (Lev. 13:42-46). The physical communication of charity meant suffering ceremonial uncleanness that could affect His involvement in corporate worship. It is clear that the act of touching is deliberate.

There are also instances of distance healing. In Mark 5:35-43, the daughter of Jairus was healed through the father’s faith and request. On other occasions, Jesus heals individuals whose loved ones came to Him on their behalf. (Matthew 8:10- 13). Furthermore, Jesus’ healing ministry is not for the sick alone; he demonstrates sensitivity for the concerns and needs of the family of the sick and dying.

Jesus endorses the use of medical assistance of the time (medicines of oil and wine) when He praises the Good Samaritan for acting as a physician; and he tells His disciples to go and do the same thing that the Samaritan did in the story.

Jesus heals because *He cares*. Jesus’ wonderful, compassionate willingness to reach out and touch the physical needs of humans demonstrates that his healing mission is not and should not be understood just in future tense but also present tense. Salvation starts now, He heals in this life, in this moment, in anticipation of something much more complete as eternity rolls on. Jesus continues to heal through his disciples and His Church.

THE HEALING MINISTRY OF THE DISCIPLES

Healing did not end with Jesus. He entrusted the healing ministry to His Church. The first apostles healed the sick. So did a large group of disciples. He trained His disciples so they could continue His ministry after His ascension into heaven. First, Jesus taught them by the words He spoke. Then, He showed them how and when He healed the sick. Jesus showed them many ways to do this. He spent many months training the disciples before He released them to do the work of the ministry. He told His followers to heal the sick, and stated that such signs as healing are evidence of faith. Jesus also told them to “cure sick people, raise up dead persons, make lepers clean, expel demons. You received free, give free” (Matthew 10: 8

For the disciples, then, doing the healing ministry was an activation of what they learned from hearing Jesus teach and seeing Him minister to people. The disciples simply imitated Jesus. For example, when Peter raised Tabitha (Dorcas) from the dead (Acts 9:40), he made the mourners leave the room where the body was, just as Jesus had done when He raised the daughter of Jairus. In imitation of Jesus, Peter commanded Tabitha to get up. In Acts 3:2-6 Peter and John healed a certain man lame from birth through the name of Jesus, with a command “rise up and walk.” In 1 Timothy 5:23 Paul asks Timothy to take wine for medicinal purposes. Moreover, Luke reports that: Publius’ father was healed (Acts 28:8-9), the viper’s bite was harmless to Paul (Acts 28:3-6), Paul healed the lame man (Acts 3:1-10), and that many other sick persons were healed (Acts 5:12-16). God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, such that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them (Acts 19:11-12).

THE HEALING MISSION OF THE CHURCH: HEALTH CARE MINISTRY IN THE CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF LAGOS

The Mission

One of the major missions of the Church is the alleviation of human suffering, which she has faithfully carried out over the centuries. This is attested to by thousands of Catholic hospitals and religious congregation who dedicate their lives to helping the sick. The basis of the healing mission of the Church is the Christian understanding of health and healing, rooted in her integral vision of the human person. Health is not a static concept, but a “dynamic state” which is influence by various factors. Christian vision emphasizes that alongside social, medical and economic factors, one’s relationship to God and other persons is also a vital category. The experience of healing and the ministry of healing are as old as humanity itself.

As we saw, Jesus spoke with the sick, touched them, and was an instrument of healing for them. Jesus used signs in his ministry of healing, signs such as mud and washing, the laying on of hands, even spittle. Mark 7:33 records that Jesus used spittle and touched a deaf man's ear. Christ desires to be present to the sick, the suffering, and the dying through His Church. The Church has been given the charge to continue Jesus' ministry of compassion and love for the sick and dying. "Heal the sick!" (Matthew 10:8). Through his Church, the Family of God, Jesus continues to minister to the sick, visiting them, touching them, and using signs, both sacraments and sacramental, and modern medical and scientific means.

The Apostles handed over the continuation of Jesus' work of healing and caring for the sick and dying to us, the present day Church. Healing is as much a mystery as it is a science. And the Church believes so much in faith healing as much as medical care. The Catholic Church is the largest non-government provider of health care in Nigeria and in the world. Catholic religious women and men in particular have been responsible for founding and running networks of hospitals in Country.

Ministry of healing

In the history of the Church, religious orders and congregations have often devoted themselves to the healing ministry of Jesus. When the Church saw their people's need for proper compassionate health care, the religious sisters, brothers and priests responded to the challenge to care for God's children, regardless of their social status (e.g., poor or rich), isolation, or distance, religious tradition. The hospitals and continuing care facilities run by consecrated persons and dioceses became places of hope for the sick, the elderly, and their families.

The Catholic nuns in particular were invited by parishes and Dioceses as well as Christian families, and provided nursing care as well as some medical, pharmaceutical, and surgical services. Nursing was a religious role for the nurse, and there was little call for science. Women religious institutes played and continue to play a particularly prominent role in the development of the Catholic Church's health care networks.

In today's scientific 21st century, the promotion of church's ministry of healing within the parish, diocese setting and public funded institutions, such as hospitals, clinics, primary health care centre, long-term care facilities or Home for the elderly, orphanage or Motherless babies' Home remain one of the most challenging opportunity of living out the Churches' vision of building communities of hope and compassion. Christian emphasis on practical charity gave rise to the development of systematic nursing and hospitals after the end of the persecution of the early Church. The Church developed a healing mission that is willing to nurse the sick and take food to them. "The care of the sick is to be placed above and before every other duty,

as Jesus whom the Church holds as its founder, placed a particular emphasis on care of the sick.”³

While many religious communities continue their commitment to the health care ministry, lay Catholics increasingly have stepped forward to collaborate in the ministry. Inspired by the example of Christ and mandated by the Second Vatican Council, lay faithful are invited to a broader and more intense field of ministries than in the past. By the virtue of baptism, lay faithful are called to participate actively in the Church’s life and mission; this endeavour certainly includes the mission of healing, the health care ministry. The participation and leadership of the lay faithful in the health care ministry, through new forms of sponsorship and governance of institutional Catholic health care, are essential for the Church to continue her ministry of healing and compassion. This is evidenced by the many men and women who are Catholics and non Catholics alike that coordinate the different Diocesan health institutions.

The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) had published the “Nigeria Catholic Health Policy” (2010), which provides guidelines for Catholic Health facilities in the country. The Catholic Archdiocese of Lagos, where I am serving as the Health Coordinator, has her history of health care services in Nigeria. Thus, in her mission, the Catholic Church has been at the forefront in the provision of health care services in the Country. The first Catholic hospital in Nigeria, the Sacred Heart Hospital, Lantoro, Abeokuta - formally under Lagos archdiocese, now Abeokuta Diocese - was built in 1895.

Ever since then, the Catholic Archdiocese of Lagos has continued to establish several health care facilities. Between 1970- 2014 the Archdiocese of Lagos has established forty- two (42) health care institutions that can be categorized into hospitals, clinics, primary health centre, and also mobile clinics. Among these facilities, five (5) belong to religious congregations.

These institutions basically provide health care services to Catholics and non Catholics alike ranging from preventive to curative treatments. The services are provided in the spirit of collaboration with other stakeholders for the common good. There has been on-going collaboration with the State Agencies (Lagos State Ministry of Health) and International non-governmental organizations such as United State Agency for International Development (USAID), with the Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Society for Family Health (SFH) and others as well as Teaching Hospitals who send their students on community experience.

Over all, the Archdiocese of Lagos health care facilities has been rated among the best in the provision of health care services in Lagos State and in the country at large. The Mission and Vision statement of these health care facilities -- which read, “To reveal the healing love of Jesus to all in need especially the sick,” and “To be a leader in the transformation of health care in our communities through faith-inspired commitment to excellence,” respectively -- stand out to fulfil the mandate of

³ Catholic Archdiocese of Lagos document on health care services, pg. 20 of 2001

the Church seeking to ensure that the services offered in the past will be continued now and into the future. Hence, the Archdiocese of Lagos health institutions is evenly distributed across the parishes, reaching the unreached at the grass root, Catholics and non Catholics alike. The Parish/diocesan health care centres have trained professionals, which comprises of the Doctors, Nurses, Laboratory Scientist and Technicians, Pharmacist, etc... They work as a team to provide quality health care services to the sick. Proper care demands proper training, accreditation, ability and compassion, and promotion of technical competence and moral probity. "She requires that those who wish to minister in acts of healing in the Archdiocese of Lagos, to be both trained and licensed within their specialized ministries."⁴

The Church, while being a major provider of health care to HIV AIDS sufferers, and of orphanages for unwanted children, has been criticized for opposing the indiscriminate provision and use of condoms and the use of contraception. Most of the criticisms, however, are unfounded, and based on ignorance and prejudices. Moral issues relating to IVF, surrogacy and stem-cell research are among other areas of potential controversy for the Church in the provision of health care.

The pastoral need of the sick is of paramount importance to Catholic health care services in Lagos archdiocese. This has resulted in greater appreciation of a team approach to health care which often includes the pastoral care of the patient. This has given rise to a Pastoral Care Department in many hospitals and health facilities where a chaplain with Clinical Pastoral Education or the Parish Priest (where applicable) is to take care of the spiritual and pastoral needs of the patients and their families as well as staff of each health care institution. In Lagos archdiocese, we advocate for the celebration of the Holy Mass at least once a month in the health facility and anointing of the sick with oil as the need arises. This has been found very helpful.

The Care of the family is another area of attention for the health care workers. The family certainly needs and desires care. It is interesting that while patient is on admission, he or she is helpless with little questioning or discussion but the family does a whole lot of questioning and discussion, very anxious about the welfare of their loved ones.

Challenges and hopes

Catholic health care in the name of Jesus is flourishing. However, the situation is changing. Perhaps, isn't there the *diminishing of the presence* of religious sisters in the healing ministry? As earlier discussed, women religious administered services; provided nursing care, assisted in spiritual care along with the local priests, and looked after the feeding, cleaning, and maintenance within these institutions. Gospel stewardship of health care resources and not-for-profit motivation keeps us responsible to patients, to society, and to God. There is a felt and growing need to

⁴ Catholic Archdiocese of Lagos Health Policy, 2014

encourage a renewed increase of active presence of consecrated women in the health care apostolate.

Our goal must always be to *reach out to serve* those who are suffering, not to sell a product. I remember number of times I had to provide food to patients before administering medication. There were no issues of *fraud or mistrust* from any angle, there was good working relationship as one family, but the story is totally different now. Less obvious but equally true, however, is the *increasing number of priests* who are now administrators of health institutions. The religious sisters have suddenly become fraudulent; it is all about "*money*." The whole idea of "*a call to serve and give love to the sick and their families*," is gradually dying. The patients are suffering in most health facilities, the ethical value of "*save life first*" which is the oath sworn by health professional is now a thing of the past. Often times when a sick person is brought to the health facility, instead of attending to the sick first, all you hear is "*go and pay first*," that is, the instruction from the administrator. Health care today is a very much a field of professionals, "*you cannot give what you don't have*." *Let the right person be in the right place*, so that the necessary skills and applications can be duly utilized and followed, ("*Square peg in a square hole*").

During the time of the early Catholic missionaries, health care services were delivered to sick people free of charge. This was so because; those medicine and equipments were already paid for by some international individuals, donor and non-governmental organizations. Even the staff salaries were paid as well. This very fact was hidden from our people. In truth, nothing was free! Somebody, from somewhere, was somehow paying for it. Now comes our own missionary time, when practically everything that is used in the health care facilities are purchased, the staff salaries have to be paid, the bills and other expenses must be paid, from the income that the facility is able to generate and often times, augment from the parish collection. The maintenance and sustenance of the health facility is another huge angle of the story; all these funds have to come from within. As a result of this, the Catholic health institutions are experiencing *staff attrition rate* due to our low salary structure.

Unfortunately, most beneficiaries of our health care services, especially the Catholic faithful are still living with this mindset, namely, that these services should be provided free of charge simply because the facility belongs to the church. We should not blame them! Still, even in relation to the church's health facilities, "*we cannot forget that a Church is able to reach material and financial independence only if the people entrusted to it do not live in conditions of extreme poverty*" (John Paul II, *Church in Africa*, n.104). As I always tell my colleagues, our duty is to educate them. They need to know that we are missionaries of our time, no one subsidizes for the services we render. And as such, we look for other ways of sustainability and affordability. Apparently, for this reason, the Lagos Archdiocese health services department responded to the yearning from Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (CSN) and strives to alleviate the sufferings of health care consumers, by establishing the *Pool Medicine Procurement Scheme* (PMPS). The whole idea of the PMP is to identify the most effective drugs and negotiate lower prices that are affordable by our health

care consumers. Jesus met the need of all the sick. We also should work towards achieving that goal, a mandate. Therefore, I encourage all, especially the Catholics, to support and grow in awareness and understanding of the Church's mission of healing and effectively contribute to its realization.

The Catholic Church's health care institutions need the government and public *support*. The health facilities are living witness to the Church's *healing presence*. Unquestionably, we must be *thankful* to all those persons and organizations, especially the religious sisters, the medical professionals, and the many unsung workers and volunteers, who have given and continue to give so generously of themselves, time, talents and know-how in the care of the sick, dying and their families.

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