

TRADITIONAL HEALING

A PASTORAL CHALLENGE FOR THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN ZAMBIA

*A Study Guide Designed for Discussions and Prayer for Small Christian Communities in
Zambia*

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Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection
Lusaka, Zambia

June 2004

FOREWORD

The Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR), in fulfilling its mission of serving the local church, set up an Inculturation Task Force in 1999. The purpose of the Task Force is to promote serious reflection on the foundations and practices of inculturation in the church in Zambia and Malawi. This is seen as a contribution to the implementation of the agenda of the African Synod.

The Task Force has produced this pamphlet, *Traditional Healing: A Challenge for the Catholic Church in Zambia*. It is designed to assist Christians to evaluate their own experiences of traditional healing, understand better the African world view, and integrate a biblical perspective into their appreciation of God's action in their lives.

The design of the pamphlet draws upon the methodology of the *Pastoral Circle*, focusing our attention on our *contact* with what is happening with traditional healing, an *analysis* of why that is happening, a *reflection* on what this means for our faith, and a *response* that guides our life experiences.

Small Christian Communities (SCCs), bible study groups, adult and youth discussion groups, catechetical programmes and on-going education classes can find this pamphlet useful. It is divided into 12 sessions, but we should not feel the need to rush through the pamphlet. Each group should take the time necessary to prayerfully absorb the message and discuss its meaning for a faith that is genuinely Christian and authentically African. Some appropriate action follow-up should be planned.

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30 June 2004

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TRADITIONAL HEALING:
A PASTORAL CHALLENGE FOR THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN ZAMBIA

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TRADITIONAL HEALING: A PASTORAL CHALLENGE FOR THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN ZAMBIA

INTRODUCTION

The importance of integrating faith and culture is succinctly stated by Pope John Paul II in his 1995 Post-Synodal Exaltation *The Church in Africa* in the following way: "By reason of its deep conviction that '*the synthesis between culture and faith is not only a demand of culture but also of faith*', because '*a faith that does not become culture is not fully accepted, not entirely thought out, not faithfully lived*'. The Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops considered inculturation a priority and an urgent task in the life of Africa's particular Churches. Only in this way can the Gospel be firmly implanted in the Continent's Christian communities." (no. 78). This calls for an identification of the important elements of African culture that are crucial for inculturation.

One of the most important areas of African culture in which the significant presence of traditional beliefs can be seen is through *sickness* and *healing*. Often, the co-existence of traditional beliefs and Christian faith is not a peaceful one. Many Christians find themselves in situations of inner conflict and much personal suffering. It is important to deal with this conflict and begin a meaningful dialogue between faith and culture. This is a necessity in Zambia where sickness abounds. Today many people are seeking various means of healing. Faith healing, traditional healing and alternative medicines are becoming popular all the time. The Church should be in the forefront of helping people to see healing in a Christian context.

As we celebrate the 10th Anniversary of the Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops (African Synod) held in 1994, the call for inculturation made by the Synod, and reiterated by the Holy Father, is far from being a reality. The *Inculturation Task Force*, a project of the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR), recognizes that some inculturation is already a reality on the level of the liturgy. Unfortunately little else is happening on reflection about culture and faith in important areas of Zambian culture. The Task Force has therefore spearheaded reflection on culturally relevant topics in the Zambian situation, especially pastorally relevant issues. This booklet is one of the results of its reflections. Other reflections have been disseminated to a wider audience through seminars held for pastoral workers in Lusaka on healing and on reconciliation.

The Inculturation Task Force has realised that true inculturation will only be a reality when the majority of Christians reflect on their faith in the light of concrete life situations. Much of the inculturation has been done on a theoretical level in universities, seminaries and other places of higher learning. There is urgent need to shift the focus of attention on inculturation from learning institutions to Small Christian Communities where Christians live concrete lives. After all the aim of inculturation is to make people holy so that they can commit themselves more and more to Jesus Christ. It is for this reason that the Task Force for Inculturation offers this booklet to Small Christian Communities as a means of helping Christians reflect on their faith in light of their Zambian culture and hopefully enable them find ways of improving their faith while being faithful to what is good in their culture. The aim of inculturation is to make people truly Christian and truly African.

SESSION ONE

THE AFRICAN WORLD VIEW

1.0 Story: The Misdirected Anger of the Spirit

(This story can be performed as a sketch or read to the community.)

The following story relates how a sister blames her own brother for the illness and death of her only son and child. To avoid disclosing their identity we call the brother Mr Chenjelani Musumali and his sister Mrs Chanda Lufafa (nee Musumali).

Mrs Lufafa had only one son, while Mr Musumali, her brother, had five children, three boys and two girls. Both families did well in life and in educating their respective children.

One day Mrs Lufafa's son developed severe spinal and joint pains that he suspected to be fatigue. Within two days he became very ill and fell into a coma from which he never recovered. At the hospital he was found to be with severe malaria and meningitis. He died six hours after being admitted to the hospital.

The mother became upset and went to the diviner who told her that her brother bathed in some medicines with his wife and children, to ward off the haunt of some disgruntled dead ancestor's spirit, which then in turn killed her only son. Mrs. Lufafa was very angry because, according to her, the brother with five children acted in a very cruel manner by letting the unappeased spirit attack her in this way.

From that time there was very little love lost between the two families.

1.1 Discussion

- (i) From your experience, what would you say about the situation in the story?
- (ii) How would Mr. Musumali prove himself innocent?
- (iii) What reasons lead people to react in this way?

1.2 Understanding the African World-View

The "World-View" is a people's picture of the way things are, their concepts of nature, self and society. It contains their most comprehensive ideas of order.

In the "African World-View" there is a belief in the order of existence. That is, in God, humanity and nature.

- God is the creator/supreme being who has the fullness of life.
- Then come the spirits' world: natural or ancestral spirits and the spirits of the dead,
- Human beings: the human community is believed to be at the centre of the world. People are pre-occupied with maintaining their human community

to which their prayers to God, veneration of ancestors, their attitude to inanimate things and other activities are geared.

- Then come other creatures like animals, birds, trees and plants, and non-moving creatures like stones and soil.
- Life is believed to increase through growth, ritual, or being possessed by a spirit/spirits. It can be decreased by curses, being in contact with harmful things like medicines, disrespecting elders and/or ancestors, neglecting essential taboos, etc.
- Both spirits and humans can tap and use the life of inanimate things to increase or decrease life in other humans. For example in our story Mr. Musumali is believed to have tapped into the life of an ancestral spirit to punish his sister.
- Threat to life is the ultimate sin/wrong in the African World View
- Since striving for the fullness of life is the main pre-occupation, any threat to life is radically abhorred, and anyone who is believed to be a threat to life is a bitter enemy of humanity. She/he is to be tracked down and dealt with severely. This struggle and desire for fullness of life is what led Mrs. Lufafa to hate her brother Chenjelani whom she accuses of causing the death of her son.

1.3 Discussion

- (i) Is there anything in this African world view you really like?
- (ii) Is there anything in this African world view, which is contrary to good Christian living?
- (iii) Would our Christian saints fit in this African world view?

1.4 Conclusion: Petitions for Healing through Reconciliation

The members of the Small Christian Community should take turns to present the petitions. The petitions conclude with a prayer for healing and reconciliation.

SESSION TWO

THE WORLD VIEW IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

2.0 What can we learn from the Old Testament?

What we learnt in Session One is Mrs. Lufafa's strong belief that her brother Chenjelani manipulated the spirit of an angry deceased ancestor that caused the death of her son. We also went beyond the story to the fundamental ideas of the African world view. Now let us look at a similar story in the Old Testament where a widow regards the sickness and death of her only son as a punishment meted on her by God through the prophet lodging in her home.

2.1 First Kings 17:17 – 24 The Prophet Elijah and the Widow's Son

(One person reads this Bible passage and others listen attentively.)

It happened that the son of the mistress of the house fell sick; and his illness was so severe that in the end he had no breath left in him. And the woman said to Elijah, 'What quarrel have you with me, man of God? Have you come here to bring my sins home to me and kill my son?' 'Give me your son,' he said, and taking him from her lap, carried him to the upper room where he was staying and laid him on his own bed. He cried out to Yahweh, 'Yahweh my God, do you mean to bring grief to the widow who is looking after me by killing her son...? Yahweh my God, may the soul of this child, I beg you, come into him again!' Yahweh heard the prayer of Elijah and the soul of the child returned to him again and he revived.... 'Look', Elijah said 'your son is alive'. And the woman replied; 'Now I know you are a man of God and the word of Yahweh in your mouth is truth itself.'

In the story of Mr Musumali and his sister, Mrs. Lufafa, death is believed to have been caused by an angry ancestor as punishment for bad behaviour by the descendants. In the passage above, both the woman and the prophet believe that death has been brought down by God as punishment for the woman. Only the end result is different. In the Old Testament the end result is positive while in the African story the end is hatred.

2.2 The Old Testament Forbids Consultation of Diviners

In the Old Testament we find a strong condemnation of the practice of consulting diviners. Two examples are:

- Lev. 19: 31 "Do not have recourse to the spirits of the dead or to magicians; they will defile you. I am Yahweh your God."
- Lev. 20: 6 "If a man has recourse to the spirits of the dead or to magicians, to prostitute himself by following them, I shall set my face against that man and outlaw him from my people".

2.3 Discussion: Looking at our Faith

- (i) Is our Christian faith strong enough to resist the strong temptation and family pressure to visit diviners in order to establish the cause of misfortune?
- (ii) What can we, as a Christian community, do to support one another when one member is under pressure from the family, friends, or opponents, to go to the diviner or is accused of being the source of misfortune?

2.4 Conclusion: Prayers for Strength

Conclude the meeting with prayers for strength for each member of the community and for all our fellow Christians.

SESSION THREE

THE WORLD VIEW IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

3.0 Newness of the New Testament

To open this session, we briefly review what we learned in Session Two.

And now we turn to that part of the Bible that means so much to us Christians, the New Testament. For here we see how Christ brought into the world, with his Good News, a whole new approach to living. With the influence of the Holy Spirit we received in the sacrament of Baptism, we Christians today must live new lives.

3.1 The Challenge of Christ's Coming

Both the African world view and Old Testament world view are in need of the redemption that Christ brings. In the Acts of the Apostles the existing world view of the people (both Jewish and Gentile) is challenged by the Apostles. Examples:

Acts 8: 9 – 25 Simon the magician who wanted to buy the power of the Holy Spirit was proved wrong by Peter and John.

Acts 13: 6 – 12 A magician was struck blind by Paul.

Acts 16: 16 – 25 Paul and Silas were imprisoned for healing a slave girl soothsayer of her spirit.

3.2 Redeemed in Christ

In the letters of the New Testament there are many instances of how the World-View of both African and the Old Testament can be transformed and healed by the redeeming Christ: Below are some examples:

1 Cor. 3: 22 – 23 “Paul, Cephas, the world, life and death, the present and the future, are all your servants; but you belong to Christ and Christ belongs to God.”

Rom 8: 38 – 39 “For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Gal 4 : 3 “...we also... were enslaved to the elementary powers of the world.”

Eph. 1: 20 – 23 “...God raised Jesus from the dead seating him at his right hand in heaven... he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the Church, which is the body....”

Eph. 3:10 ...”so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the Church to the principalities and authorities in the heavens.”

Eph. 6: 12 – 18 “With all prayer and supplication, pray at every opportunity in the spirit... be watchful with all perseverance and supplication for all the holy ones and for me... that I may have the courage to speak as I must”.

Col 2: 15 “...having striped himself in death, he [Christ] boldly made an open display of the angelic powers, leading them in triumphal procession of the cross.”

These Principalities and Powers are leaders of the demonic world. According to Paul, Christ has conquered and reconciled the hostile powers.

In the African tradition the universe is like a spider’s web in which spirits and powers of the invisible world and human beings of the visible world are in continuous interaction. But now Christ alone is in charge of the universe.

Triumph: Christ has triumphed over the spirits (here seen as evil) and has paraded them as captives. The imagery here is taken from the practice of a Roman “triumph”, a victorious procession in which the defeated enemies were paraded behind the chariot of the conqueror.

Col 2: 16 “Let no one, then pass judgement on you in matters of food and drink or with regard to a festival or new moon or Sabbath.”

1 Peter 3: 18 – 22 “... Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous, that he might lead you to God. ... It is not a removal of dirt from the body but an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who ...is at the right hand of God with angels, authorities, and powers subject to him.

Jesus Christ himself preached a Gospel of true love and reconciliation that challenges our world view and that of the Old Testament. For example, in *Matthew 5: 23-24* Jesus says: “... reconcile with your neighbour and then come to offer your gift”. In *Luke 6: 27* he states: “Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you...” In *Ephesians 4:26* the apostle Paul, continuing to preach the message of Jesus on love and reconciliation, says: “Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun set on your anger.”

3.3 Discussion

- (i) Did any of these texts from the New Testament touch you? How and why?
- (ii) What would be the starting point for Mr Musumali and his sister Mrs Lufafa for coming back to their normal relationship as members of the same family?
- (iii) How do these texts from the New Testament challenge us as individuals and as an African Christian community?

3.4 Conclusion: Conclude the meeting with a prayer for genuine reconciliation.

SESSION FOUR AFRICAN TRADITIONAL HEALING

4.0 Story of Two Sick Friends

(This story can be read as it is or acted out)

Here is a situation of two people, both Christian and both sick. They are suffering from severe stomach pains. We call them Mulenga Zulu and Mundia Hamweemba:

Mulenga Zulu prays hard for healing from God. He has a faith that tells him that he is going to get cured. He does not believe in going to a traditional healer to get medicine. He prays for a long time but healing does not come his way.

Mundia Hamweemba has a similar problem. He has a faith that tells him to pray for healing from God. As well as that, he makes an effort to visit the traditional healer who provides him with medicines in the form of roots and leaves. He takes the dosage by chewing and rubbing some of it on his stomach. He is cured in a short time. Surprisingly, he is not open to advise his friend Zulu to visit the same traditional healer because he thinks that his faith would be questioned.

4.1 Discussion

- (i) What is your experience of the situation described above?
- (ii) What is the reaction of Christians who have gone through similar situations?
- (iii) What would make you and others go to a traditional healer instead of going to the hospital?
- (iv) Are there reasons other than physical healing for going to a traditional healer?

4.2 A Story from Scripture: John 9: 1-7

The cure of the man born blind:

As he went along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth. His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should have been born blind?' 'Neither he nor his parents sinned,' Jesus answered, 'he was born blind so that the works of God might be revealed in him...' Having said this, he spat on the ground, made a paste with the spittle, put this over the eyes of the blind man, and said to him, 'Go and wash in the Pool of Siloam' (the name means 'one who has been sent'). So he went off and washed and came back able to see.

Context of the passage:

Jesus is the light of the world, John 8: 12. What follows after this verse is a justification for this strong claim. It closes with the miracle of the healing of a blind man. Having "sight" is being equated to walking in the "light". Jesus demonstrates that he is giving that light/sight to the blind man.

Jesus uses spittle (saliva) and earth to make mud and, applies it on the blind man. The blind man follows the instruction of going to wash in the pool. Consequently the man gets healed.

4.3 Discussion

- (i) Why did Jesus use saliva and earth to bring healing to the blind person?
- (ii) Did Jesus have power to heal him without using the paste?
- (iii) What is the value of human cooperation in healing?

4.4 Conclusion: Prayer for Light

Read again the scripture passage from John 9:1-7 about the cure of the blind man. Reflect quietly on its meaning in your own life and in the life of the community. Then share some concluding prayerful petitions for light.

SESSION FIVE

WHY SOME CHRISTIANS GO TO TRADITIONAL HEALERS FOR HEALING

5.0 Story about a Catechist Who Goes to a Traditional Healer

(This story can be read as it is or acted out)

John Zulu's wife, Maiwase never fully recovered after giving birth. The clinical officer and the nurses at the town hospital just told her she was anaemic. They said she should eat healthy foods and do exercises and then they sent her home to the village.

Back in the village, Maiwase was constantly tired and could not take good care of the baby. The neighbours told her it was a common illness that the village traditional doctor could easily sort out. For John Zulu, it was not as easy as that. As the chief catechist in the village, John Zulu had reputation to protect. He had risen through the ranks to become a respected chief catechist, trusted by all the priests and personally known to the Bishop. Now, his wife and her people were insisting that he take her to a traditional healer! But John was worried: "What would the parish priest think of me if the story leaked out? What example would this be to members of my little church? What if I lost my position as a result of going to that healer?"

Recently, his mother in-law had started saying that if Maiwase died, John would have to shoulder the blame. Yesterday John received a delegation that came to talk to him about his wife's sickness. They advised him to visit the famous traditional healer, Mwenengimbu, who lived about 80 km away. "That way", they said, "you can have your wife cured and still save your reputation as catechist. The Christians and the parish would never find out".

5.1 Discussion

- (i) What would you advise John Zulu to do in this situation?
- (ii) Are there any other reasons why Christians visit the traditional healer for healing?
- (iii) What would justify a Christian going to a traditional healer?
- (iv) Discuss the saying, "God helps those who help themselves."

5.2 Seeking Healing

People go to a traditional healer to seek healing, which entails peace and comfort on both the physical and spiritual levels. In other words, they are yearning for a healing that is integral and whole, touching their entire life. Archbishop Emmanuel Milingo expresses it well in his writings about what constitutes healing. He states:

Healing means taking away from a person a disturbance in life that acts as a deprivation of self-fulfillment and which is considered an unwanted parasite. In whatever way we take it, the expected result is to release someone from a stumbling block to human fulfillment. This may be taken in a physical or spiritual sense.

5.3 Is this integral healing available in modern medicine?

This is the kind of healing that people are seeking: a healing that is integral and whole. It may be available in modern medicine. However, modern medicine and health care are often simply too expensive for many of our poor people to afford. Or modern medicine may not effectively treat some of the ills that African people face. For example, the cases of people who suffer from Mashawe (the possessed) – the majority of these are poor women. They may need the following to have their sickness healed:

- A good understanding of their world-view
- Good traditional counsellors
- Medicines
- Good care-givers who appreciate their suffering

Can modern medicine provide the above in Zambia? How can we provide the above conditions given the chronic non-availability of drugs in our hospitals? The issuing of prescriptions to sick people who cannot afford to buy medicines is a common situation at our hospitals. For most of our people the alternative is to go where they hope to find healing: traditional healer.

5.4 Discussion

- (i) What is missing in modern medicine that people seek in traditional healing?
- (ii) What can be done to improve this situation, by government, church, local communities?
- (iii) How do people feel about the lack of modern medicine to meet the needs of healing that people seek?
- (iv) What are the words in local languages that people use to express *healing and traditional healer*?

It is of interest to note here that some traditional healers are called by the name of the spirit that is with them. This is also found in the Bible, e.g., Yosefe, Yohane, Eliya, etc. These traditional healers are considered to be possessed by good spirits. Sometimes they use Holy Scripture in their healing processes.

5.5 Conclusion: Asking God for Blessings

Reflect on this Bible passage, Matthew 7: 7-8:

So I say to you: Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; everyone who searches finds; everyone who knocks will have the door opened.

People in the community can then offer specific petitions for themselves and for others whom they know need healing of different sorts.

SESSION SIX

THE FEAR OF WITCHCRAFT

6.0. Story From a Real Life Situation in a Village

(This story can be performed as a sketch or read to the community.)

In one village the community has experienced several deaths that they believe is caused by witchcraft. Several medicine men are consulted but fail to cure the illnesses. So they hire a witch-finder who uses his artefacts and names the person believed to be responsible for the deaths. It is a lady belonging to the Legion of Mary. The woman happens to be the grandmother to one family that lost a child. She moves forward and disclaims any involvement with the deaths in bitter sobs. She tells the community to kill her if she had any dealings with the deaths. But no one listens to her. She is called a witch and is avoided even by her own son, the father to the deceased child.

Later the son falls sick and goes to the hospital and is diagnosed to be HIV-positive. He has similar symptoms as those presented by his child and some others who had died and believed to have been bewitched. He now feels his mother was wrongly identified as a witch.

The woman lives a miserable life, isolated and betrayed. She dies a few years later. The priest is called before she dies and anoints her. She manages to kneel for the anointing. After the anointing the woman sleeps without any assistance and dies a peaceful death. Everyone is shocked at the peacefulness of her death and the calmness of her countenance. The community is puzzled as people continue to die with similar complaints.

Later on the son of the suspected witch gets very ill and the wife too starts showing similar symptoms. The man dies a very sad death as he now believes the mother did not forgive him for the betrayal and humiliation she suffered.

6.1 Discussion

- (i) What did we see happening in the story?
- (ii) Does this happen in real life?
- (iii) Does it happen in our communities?
- (iv) How do you feel about it?
- (v) As Christians what can we do about it?

6.2 Dealing with Witchcraft in Zambian Law

The Zambian law does not recognise witchcraft or the practice of witchcraft. It is an offence to practice witchcraft or to name or accuse someone of being a witch. There are penalties stipulated for practicing acts constituting witchcraft, employment or solicitation of persons in matters of witchcraft, carrying out advice in matters of witchcraft, deceiving or imposing by means of witchcraft and possessing charms or any other artifacts for the purposes of any act punishable by the Act (see Chap. 90, p.3).

This law was enacted to deal with serious problems in communities that resulted from accusing people of practicing witchcraft. To this day there are broken relationships in families and communities. Murders of suspected witches and wizards still happen. Many people are still being accused, isolated and shunned. Most of those who are accused are defenceless old people, those who do not have anyone to protect them, those who seem to have more material things than others.

While the Zambian law is very clear on witchcraft, deep conviction on the existence of witchcraft in the African world order still prevails in many of our communities. This world view is especially deep-rooted among closed societies. But it is also true that many other people in open societies can also be deeply influenced by this world view that includes the existence and activities of witchcraft.

Although there are exceptions, in general many Christians seem to be caught up in two worlds -- that of traditional beliefs and practices passed on by the tribe and that of Christian beliefs and practices taught by Christian religion. For many Christians – whether highly educated in modern sciences or not – Christianity has failed to change their convictions on witchcraft. The Christian religion carries them when happenings are favourable, but they invariably turn to traditional beliefs and practices when happenings are traumatic.

6.3 Listening to God's Word

Read this text from Luke 4: 18 -19:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.

After prayerful reflection, discuss these questions:

- (i) Today in Zambia, who are the poor, the captives, the blind and the oppressed mentioned in this passage?
- (ii) How can we become captives for fear of witchcraft?
- (iii) How does this fear retard spiritual and economic development?
- (iv) What can we do about it as a community?

6.4 Conclusion: Praying for Strong Faith and Courage

Read this text from Luke 6:47-49 and then share some prayers to stand firm in the face of challenges such as unexplained death or misfortunes.

Anyone who comes to me and listens to my words and obeys them – I will show you what he is like. He is like a man who, in building his house, dug deep and laid the foundation on rock. The river overflowed and hit the house but could not shake it, because it was well built. But anyone who hears my words and does not obey them is like a man who built his house without laying a foundation; when the flood hit that house it fell at once – and what a terrible crash that was!

SESSION SEVEN

LESSONS DRAWN FROM LIFE AND HOLY SCRIPTURE

7.0. Story about a Greedy Traditional Healer

(This story can be read or performed as a sketch.)

What the people of Hamanjanji village remember is that one day they woke up and among them in the village was Doctor Mwanalume weni weni. Since he was a guest of the village headman, everyone accepted him without question. Doctor Mwanalume weni weni spoke several languages and claimed not to be of this world. He said he was sent to Hamanjanji village by the ancestors who had seen and heard the suffering of the village.

When the story went round that the village headman's senior wife had finally conceived a son because of medicine given her by Doctor Mwanalume weni weni, the whole village was truly excited about the news. They could not believe their luck to have in their midst such a great healer. Soon Doctor Mwanalume weni-weni was curing all kinds of diseases in the village. Simon Jere got a good job in town using a lucky charm from Doctor Mwanalume weni-weni. Mudenda's mother-in-law was suddenly able to walk after being bed-ridden for many years.

The only problem was Doctor Mwanalume weni-weni's charges for a cure. His "medical bills" coming only after a cure had been performed were too expensive for the villagers. For the lucky charm, Simon Jere had to pay three cows and now only had one cow left. Mudenda had to give up all his maize produce for the year. Those who could not pay were treated violently and threatened by the headman's advisors.

Things came to a head when Doctor Mwanalume weni-weni decided to "marry" Mutinta, who was 16 years old, as payment in kind for a cure that Mutinta's father had obtained from Doctor Mwanalume weni-weni. Mutinta's father neglected to settle the bill for his cure, claiming he was still feeling unwell. It was then that Doctor Mwanalume-weni-weni decided to take Mutinta by force. What upset everyone in the village was that Doctor Mwanalume weni-weni was supported in his action by the headman. Mutinta was already engaged to Gideon.

7.1 Story about a Generous Traditional Healer

As above, this story can be read or performed as a sketch. Then contrast this story with the one above.

Mrs Katongo Nyirenda is a very dedicated member of the St Anna Association at St Peter and Paul Catholic parish in Lusaka. Mrs Katongo Nyirenda was raised by her grandmother in the village. As a young girl, Katongo Nyirenda often accompanied her grandmother on various errands including frequent visits to the fields. As they walked, her grandmother would show her various herbs, plants and trees that she said cured several diseases. They often played a game. Her grandmother would ask little Katongo, "What's the name of that tree and what disease do its leaves cure?" Little Katongo would have to remember or else her grandmother would rebuke her.

As a child, Katongo's house was always host to many people in the village who came to consult her grandmother on various cures for their ailments. Her grandmother never took any payment. Sometimes, a grateful mother whose child had been cured would bring Katongo Nyirenda's granny a chicken or some cassava.

One afternoon, at a meeting with fellow St Anna members in the parish, Mrs Katongo Nyirenda noticed that the baby of her friend, Mrs Muyunda, was coughing continuously. Mrs Muyunda explained that she had no money to buy the medicine prescribed by the clinic for her baby. After the meeting, Mrs Katongo Nyirenda invited Mrs Muyunda to her home where she gave her some herbs for the baby's cough. Within three days Mrs Muyunda's baby got better and from then on, members in the St Anna Association would consult her for help with various ailments. However, some diseases she could not cure and she always referred those to the clinic. Mrs Katongo Nyirenda, like her grandmother, never took payment. She adamantly refused money and said as a Christian she could not profit from the suffering of fellow Christians. Occasionally, some grateful members would give her gifts here and there. These she accepted.

It came as a shock to Mrs Katongo Nyirenda when, at a blousing ceremony for St Anna members, her offer to be one of the cooks preparing food for the reception was turned down. At first, she thought that the group would assign her to a different duty. But one St Anna member told her bluntly, "You can't cook with us because you like using medicines a lot." Mrs Katongo Nyirenda was devastated. From then onwards, she left the group and felt uneasy and guilty about going to Church.

7.2 Discussion

- (i) What did you see in the two sketches?
- (iii) Are there good reasons why people should go to the traditional healers?
- (iv) Why has the Church in the past discouraged Christians from going to traditional healers?
- (v) Have you ever come across a traditional healer who was not honest? Share your experience with the group.
- (vi) "You will know them by their fruits..." What is Jesus saying to us about false traditional healers?
- (vii) What constitutes a good and genuine traditional healer?

7.3 Should the Church Have a Positive View of Traditional Healing?

The church should have a more positive view over traditional healing because God may be working through it to bring healing to the people. Healing that comes to a sick person through traditional means can truly be God-given. God is the greatest being among other things. As a result other things can be used to enhance life in the community, e.g., trees or herbs can be used for healing. It should be recognized that God can work through traditional healers who use herbs and trees, as the Bemba proverb confirms: "Kwimba kati, kusansa na Lesa"

Indeed, for medicines to heal someone, God's power is there. This is why the church welcomes good herbal medicines and honest, knowledgeable traditional healers.

Such good healers are carrying out the work of Christ, by restoring wholeness to the people. These healers are open to anyone who is sick just as Christ was. Indeed, they are close to the people. They remove the threat of evil from the sick people. They create joy for people, since, life is regarded as wealth. In this way they are rendering valuable service to the people of God.

7.4 Jesus and Healing in the Bible

Reflectively read Matthew 7: 15 – 20, and as a Small Christian Community try to discover its meaning in relationship to this challenge of traditional healing.

Beware of false prophets who come to you disguised as sheep but underneath are ravenous wolves. You will be able to tell them by their fruits. Can people pick grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles? In the same way, a sound tree produces good fruit but a rotten tree bad fruit. A sound tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor a rotten tree bear good fruit. Any tree that does not produce good fruit is cut down and thrown on the fire. I repeat, you will be able to tell them by their fruits.

Holy Scripture presents Jesus as a person who knows that healing is an essential component of human life. Sick people become restless until they get healed (Matthew 9: 20-22). As such, almost all the miracles Jesus performed dealt with healing and bringing people back to wholeness.

To heal means to cure the whole person, physically as well as spiritually. After healing someone from a physical disease, Jesus is sometimes quoted as saying, "My friend your sins are forgiven you" (see Luke 5: 17-20 and John 5: 1-14). Here, Jesus is alluding to the truth that healing which is physical (curing disease) is connected to the spiritual (forgiving sin).

If a person has to receive healing that was "whole", the two components of human life – spiritual and physical -- have to be taken into account. Concentrating on one at the expense of the other will only yield negative repercussions. Archbishop Milingo underscores this point very clearly:

Sometimes the stumbling block to physical healing may be an attachment to vice. For instance, not granting forgiveness or refusing to accept it has delayed some physical healing, and in some others the healing has never even taken place.

As Jesus was bringing healing to the people, he always bore in mind the world view of the people, their culture and their mind-set. In this process he did not lose focus on his objective, the task to bring salvation to all of humanity. Jesus did not minimise the suffering in peoples' lives. Rather he emphasized that victory in the resurrection would be theirs (Matthew. 5: 11-12). Fr. H. Hinfelaar, M.Afr., summarizes the healing ministry of Jesus in the following words:

He was a child of his time and called himself the son of man. He took the people and their ailments seriously and did not condemn them, but tried to heal them. He started from where they were, not from where they ought to be.

He accepted their world-view of devils, angels and great struggle between good and evil. At the same time he challenged them to take one step further, to have faith in the victory, the resurrection. He did not just cure for sake of a miracle but demanded a real conversion, and gave the person a new mission, a new meaning to life. 'Go and...' He taught them to take responsibility of their own situation. He was not a magician and refused to 'perform' a miracle on the cross.

7.5 Discussion

- (i) In what way can Jesus be equated to a good and honest traditional healer?
- (ii) Does Holy Scripture support the taking of herbal medicines by believers?
- (iii) Do you know anyone who has really been cured by a good traditional healer? Is that person a Christian?

7.6 Conclusion: Praying to distinguish good traditional healers from bad ones.

Read Luke 9: 49 – 50 reflectively:

John spoke up. 'Master', he said, 'we saw someone driving out devils in your name, and because he is not with us we tried to stop him.' But Jesus said to him, 'You must not stop him: anyone who is not against you is for you.'

Share prayers for the guidance of the Holy Spirit to be able to distinguish who is really on God's side and who is not in this whole matter of traditional healing.

SESSION EIGHT

OUR RESPONSE AS CHRISTIANS

8.0 Sketch about a Nigerian film full of witchcraft

Present a simple sketch of some people – adults as well as youth and children -- watching a video of a Nigerian film that is filled with witchcraft examples. Show the confusion and the fear that such a film can bring to some of those who watch it. The people cry out for some help in understanding how to respond to this. For it is something that happens not only in Nigeria but also in Zambia!

We have looked at the African world view and compared it with the biblical one. In the context of the two world views, we have looked at witchcraft as distinguished from traditional healing. There is need for us to respond to what is being presented in this booklet. The guidelines that are given below will assist us understand better the material of this booklet and help us have a balanced view of traditional healing and the church. It is worth noting that sometimes the media, some songs and films in our society do not help us deal adequately with the problem of traditional healing and witchcraft. Sometimes these forms of media may even promote belief in witchcraft.

8.1 The Church's Pastoral Practice in the Sacrament of the Sick

As we deal with this very important issue, it will be of benefit to reflect on the following points and to share our own experiences and reactions:

- There is need to clearly reject witchcraft because it is destructive of good community living and perpetuates injustices in our societies. Both our Christian faith and the Zambian secular society we live in reject belief in witchcraft, witch-finding and practices (See the Witchcraft Act).
- Divination – trying to find out who is causing problems -- should be clearly rejected because it brings about division and conflict among individuals, families and the community.
- There is need to make good use of the Sacrament of the Sick. This is especially true when it is communally celebrated in Small Christian Communities in line with the African stress on community life.
- The church's pastoral programme should always try to take into account the African worldview. In other words, people need an *inculturated* approach to the sacraments. People need more time to be with the priests and other pastoral workers like Jesus did. Remember that Jesus would heal people even on the Sabbath day (see, for example, Mark 2: 27). People would like to see an approach from the church's ministers that bring about wholeness to the sick people.
- Our Christian faith tells us God heals in his own way even for those who apparently are not physically healed. Acceptance of one's illness may be a form of healing. So we should not attribute lack of physical healing to lack of faith. Healing is an action of God and we cannot force God to heal us.

8.2 Guidelines for Good Christian Practices

In the past, the traditional healer was condemned by missionaries as a pagan, a quack, a cheat, a sorcerer, etc. Terms like herbalist, traditional doctor, faith healer or medicine man were not used. In cases where a traditional healer wanted to convert to Christianity, he had first to denounce his healing profession and hand over the tools of his work to missionaries who subsequently burnt them. Only then would the traditional healer be admitted to the church.

However, in spite of this condemnation, some devoted Christians continue going to the traditional healers secretly and under the cover of darkness. They believe that the traditional healer has something that can bring healing to their sickness. This healing is seen as making people whole in the fullest sense of the word. When people are healed, they return again to the centre of the community as full and healthy members. Sometimes, however, it becomes difficult for them to reconcile their Christianity and the traditional healing frowned upon by Christianity.

With the passage of time, mission hospitals and clinics have begun to use herbal medicines and even recommend them. Today, medicines that derive from traditional healing are beginning to gain wide acceptance. There is a realization that God's healing comes to the sick through various ways and means. These ways and means may even be through traditional healing.

As we Christians deal with healing in the African context, the following points can guide us:

- 8.2.1 God is good. Everything that comes from God is good (Genesis 1: 31). Herbs that bring healing to sick people are good and are from God. This is the fundamental guiding principle.
- 8.2.2 Herbal medicines and their application have been registered as part of Zambian medical practice in the name of: Traditional Healers and Practitioners Association of Zambia (THPAZ). Christians should utilize this facility without any feeling of guilt. Traditional healing methods of using herbs and trees, etc., is acceptable. For example, nettle (bondwe) is considered a remedy for diarrhea, internal hemorrhage and backache.
- 8.2.3 Christians who visit traditional healers to obtain medicine for their sickness should not request traditional healers to be Diviners. They must not insist on wanting to know the cause of sickness. This only breeds mistrust, suspicion and hatred among the people. It also confuses the role of the traditional healer with that of a Diviner. Their going to the traditional healer should be focused on healing.
- 8.2.4 Christians should not go to the traditional healer with evil intentions of getting charms to harm other people. Genuine and honest traditional healers refuse to render such a service. Remember the words of Jesus, "So always treat others as you would like them to treat you..." (Matthew 7: 12)

- 8.2.5 Christians should know and appreciate that pastoral workers are well trained in theology, counseling, anthropology, spiritual direction and other related topics. This knowledge helps them to provide the pastoral care for the sick that is adequate and relevant.
- 8.2.6 Christians should know that the process of healing is sometimes long and requires several components. It is not only medicine that brings a person to a state of integral healing but also counseling, good pastoral care, supportive community rendered through small Christian communities, lay groups, home based care groups, etc. These are of great value and play an important role in the healing process.
- 8.2.7 All Christians are encouraged to attend seminars and workshops that deal with culture and traditional healing. This could be organized at the SCC or parish level. Christians are also urged to watch T.V. and listen to the radio whenever programmes of this nature are broadcast. Literature dealing with traditional healing and inculturation should be read and discussed at different gatherings. This will widen the understanding of traditional healing and enable people appreciate its significance on an African Church and in the life of an African Christian.
- 8.2.8 Of course Christians should above all work hard to strengthen their faith in the love of God the Father, the power of Jesus, the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The person of faith is a person who can deal with the African world view with calm wisdom and can face challenges such as those outlined in the booklet with great peace and security. Our Christian communities should regularly pray for a deepening of faith in all our members.

8.3 Discussion and Evaluation

At the end of this Eighth Session, the Small Christian Community should answer the following questions to guide their discussion of the guidelines and their overall evaluation of this booklet.

- (i) Are there any other points that could be included on the guidelines above?
- (ii) What was your general impressions of this booklet?
- (iii) What struck you most in this booklet?
- (iv) What was less helpful?
- (v) Do you have any suggestions of how to improve the areas that were less helpful?

8.4 Conclusion and Prayer to be Faithful Followers of Jesus

Read Mark 10: 51-52, and share prayer asking to be faithful followers of Jesus.

‘What do you want me to do for you?’ Jesus asked him. ‘Teacher,’ the blind man answered, ‘I want to see again.’ ‘Go,’ Jesus told him, ‘your faith has made you well.’ At once he was able to see and followed Jesus on the road.