

Healing Touch a Ministry of Caring



by Sr. Catherine Ginther, HTCP

What a tremendous privilege it is for me to embody God's love and tenderness on every person I encounter through my presence, my love and the touch of my hands. "Hello, my name is Catherine. How are you today?" This is the way I begin my introduction and invitation in my ministry with those who are poor, homeless or living on the fringe of society. I work in drop-in centers, shelters, a house of transition, a clinic, SRO's (single room occupancy) and the streets of San Francisco and Oakland CA. I am a Sister of St. Francis of Philadelphia, a Healing Touch Certified Practitioner, and a Certified Massage Therapist. Healing Touch for me is a ministry of presence among persons who are poor, homeless and for some - the outcasts of our society.

Prior to my coming to the Bay Area of California, my ministry was in the teaching profession for 30 years, followed by a second career as a Pastoral Associate for 11 years in a parish in Reading, PA. In 1999 I came to the Bay Area for a year of Sabbatical at the School of Applied Theology in Berkeley, CA. I was looking forward to enjoying classes and being rejuvenated.

Beginning a new career was not in my thoughts! During the sabbatical year, classes in embodied spirituality were offered by Mary Ann Finch, director of the Care Through Touch Institute, a school of massage, in San Francisco, CA. The Institute's training is in massage and working with the poor, those living on the streets and persons overlooked by our society. Opportunities for working with Mary Ann in the Tenderloin District of San Francisco, were available in these classes. That was ten years ago

and became for me a ministry of caring through seated chair massage. Early in those years I became familiar with Healing Touch through a practitioner I met while working in one of the clinics. In September of 2008, I became a Healing Touch Certified Practitioner.

Healing Touch is a beautiful way for me to be present to persons so much in need of making connections and being recognized for who they are as human beings. It is a tremendous privilege for me to embody God's love and tenderness on every person presenting themselves regardless of condition, appearance, race or culture. When I touch a person's body it is with the same kind of reverence and spiritual connection as if I was offering them a sacred anointing. It is restoring them to their dignity -- worthy of being seen, accepted and loved.

Many of my clients are destitute and have mental and physical illnesses, as well as addictions, or they are escaping from prostitution. Some are dying. Many are transient and do not return for subsequent treatment. Others frequent the facilities and choose a Healing Touch session on a more regular basis. The techniques that I most frequently use are *Magnetic Clearing*, *Chakra Connection*, and *Mind Clearing*. I use *Magnetic Clearing* because I feel it is so important to clear the layers of debris from the aura in order to free the person of all that cripples the physical body and human spirit. Following with a *Chakra Connection* reconnects and balances the physical, emotional and spiritual systems of the person and produces an over all feeling of well-being.

Very often I find they relax and fall sleep during the *Chakra Connection*. Many tell me they experience something being

pulled off their bodies or being pulled from their feet during the *Magnetic Clearing*. The sense of “electric” or warmth moving through the body is expressed with the *Chakra Connection*, *Mind Clearing*, and for the most part, all of the techniques place the individual in a peaceful frame of mind. They are better able to interact with members of the staff or with other persons in the drop-in centers. Some will be more willing to take the risk to trust others. Others will begin to want to take the next step to better their life or living situation.

The *Chakra Spread* has assisted in helping those who have given me some indication that they want to go deeper within themselves. Almost every time the person will have some emotional release during the *Chakra Spread*. This usually results in their making changes or choices or at least looking for the necessary help that will lead to a better life. Changes or choices may not come immediately but are very often reported during follow-up sessions a week or two later.

Most of the feedback from time with my clients is a smile, “thank you,” or an expression of how good the session made the person feel. Comments such as the following reassure me of the value of energy balancing sessions with the population I choose to serve: “*You treat me like a human being.*” “*You don’t blame or shame me.*” “*You treat me with dignity.*” “*Before long you feel something change inside and then, before you know it it’s gone deeper than that. For a few minutes you let go of your thoughts and fears.*” “*I’m going to get in touch with my son. He’s always trying to track me down and I never answer him.*”

Healing Touch for me is a ministry “announcing the good news to the poor ...release to prisoners, recovery of sight to the blind, and to let the broken victims go free.” I am humbled in their vulnerability. I am blessed in their trust. I see myself in these my friends!

Here are a few stories of people I have worked with:

Kit is a 45 year-old woman who frequently comes to the women’s day drop-in center. This is a place where women can take a shower, wash clothes and have something to eat. While there they are invited to sign up for a Healing Touch session. Kit has been coming off and on since August of 2008. Kit has been off drugs and alcohol for a year and a half and has not smoked for

five months. She struggles with depression. Today her concern is about where she is living. (A deplorable roach infested single room in a hotel where bathroom facilities are shared with all who are living on the floor.) She would like to be able to move. She lives on SSI and has no medical insurance. My choice of techniques for this session included *Opening Spiral Meditation*, *Scudder*, *Closing Spiral Meditation*.

Following the treatment Kit reported feeling very relaxed and supported in her efforts to change. She feels she can look at her housing situation more calmly and seek information on options.

Another day after a session in which I used *Chakra Spread* and *Mind Clearing*, Kit said that in the week following the session she had spells of crying. She did not know why she was crying but a few days after the crying spell she felt so much better emotionally and had clearer insights about her life as it is today and how it was before losing everything to a drug habit. Presently she is working with a case manager whose help she sought to find better housing.

Billy, who is in his 60’s and recently released from years in prison, is trying to readjust to living in society. He is a regular at St. Mary’s Center, a full service program for poor and homeless seniors. Billy comes to Healing Touch for back pain, a result of an attack in the shower during his time in prison.

Billy feels he is able to bend and to walk with less pain after he has a HT treatment.

Over several sessions techniques included *Pain Management*, *Chelation of the 1st four bodies with Spinal Clearing*, as well as, *Magnetic Clearing* and *Back Techniques*, including *Vertebral Spiral* and *Hopi*. Billy says he always knows he is going to sleep better the night he has a Healing Touch session.

E.J., a victim of child and adult abuse, seems frightened and not sure she can trust anyone. She sits at a distance from



Above: Sr. Catherine offering HT to a homeless man who came to the shelter where she volunteers.

everyone and her eyes observe everything going on around her, including every move I make. I love to give her a smile and say hello. She doesn't answer or acknowledge my presence. This had gone on for almost a year. This past March, she did not place her name on the sign up sheet but just came and sat on the chair next to the treatment table. I invited her to have a session and helped her on to the table. E.J. wears layers of clothes including hat and scarf. As I began a *Chakra Connection*, E.J suddenly lifted her head and asked me to get her gloves from the nearby cart where she had placed her belongings. At this time it isn't possible to receive verbal feedback from her. However, I am grateful that she trusts me and is allowing me to engage her in the session. My techniques included *Magnetic Clearing* and *Mind Clearing*.

Photo on page 22: Sr. Catherine offering HT to a woman at a drop in shelter where women can shower, wash clothes, get food, support and rest.