

By His wounds we are healed. Is 53:5
Healing Prayer in a Holistic, Eucharistic and Latin American Approach

by

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Al pueblo latinoamericano que peregrina herido,
en la esperanza de su añorada sanación y
liberación **en Cristo.**

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Chapter 1

Introduction

I had a surgery days after the healing prayer on me and felt inner peace and confidence to face that difficult procedure and thanks be to God, everything was okay, so the prayer helped me to face the moment of hardship. –Juan¹

Since long before my priestly ordination, I have been interested in different streams of gospel proclamation in Latin America not only theoretically, but also in terms of their pastoral applications. Even during my six years of study and ministry in Europe, I always attended to the richness, possibilities and limitations of the branches of the church in my Latin American culture.² I have always been curious to see the intersection of these different church cultures and how their complementarity could enrich the church or how the confusion concerning them could destroy the most noble values of each. I have experienced similar intersections in my pastoral work with Latino communities here in the United States³ accompanying congregations in Odessa, Texas, and Tulsa, Oklahoma,

¹ Focus group.

² As we know in Latin American culture, the predominant religion has been Roman Catholicism and the predominant language is Spanish. But it is important to emphasize that cultural diversity is vast. It is a universe of cultures in which syncretism has been overcome and the gospel has been enculturated with good synthesis examples. “Historian and anthropologist Nancy Farris has moved to view religious change in terms of dialog and creative synthesis and a continual process of interaction”. See on John Lynch, *New Worlds, A Religious History of Latin America*. (London: Yale University Press, 2012), 22. But there also exist examples where violence, exploitation have been experienced and where syncretism is strong with aberrations that are still in force to this day. It is enough to mention the present resurgence of worship in Latin America and abroad to the goddess pachamama (mother earth).

³ The 2020 Census shows how the Latino community continues to grow faster than other groups. “The Hispanic or Latino population, which includes people of any race, was 62.1 million in 2020. The Hispanic or Latino population grew 23%, while the population that was not of Hispanic or Latino origin grew 4.3% since 2010.”

Accessed September 23, 2021, [Improved Race and Ethnicity Measures Reveal U.S. Population Is Much More Multiracial \(census.gov\)](https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2021/race-ethnicity.html)

in their hopes and hardships.⁴ I believe the work of the brilliant Mexican-American theologian Virgilio Elizondo in his book *The Future is Mestizo* is helpful here. Elizondo argues that the cultural conditioning of a people is not just an aid to the proclamation of the gospel, but the medium through which God chooses to reveal himself.⁵

This introductory chapter contains three sections. The first section locates the centrality of my topic within the larger Christian context and presents my thesis statement concerning the phenomenon of healing. The second section describes my project thesis and what I hope this paper will show. The third section provides an overview of the rest of this essay describing the contents of every chapter.

Section One: The Centrality of Healing

Two major theologies from “above” and from “below” have coexisted in Latin America. These two primary strands are theologies of liberation and the charismatic movement. Social expressions linked to both expressions are always based in the Bible although sometimes with fundamentalist and sometimes with more academic approaches. Currently, these expressions are manifested in practically all Protestant and Catholic churches, sometimes in direct opposition to each other and at other times in ways highlighting their complementarity.⁶

⁴ “La Iglesia abrió sus puertas a los hispanos, aunque la mayoría de las veces titubeando, más que nada por no saber cómo prestar servicio a un pueblo de cultura diferente, de estado socioeconómico inferior y que para el colmo de males habla una lengua que no es la inglesa.” Isaias A. Rodríguez, *Historia del Ministerio Hispano en la Iglesia Episcopal*. Logros, frustraciones y esperanzas, (Atlanta, Sauer, 2015), 37.

⁵ Virgilio Elizondo, *The Future is Mestizo*, (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 2000), 89.

⁶ El teólogo luterano alemán Wolfhart Pannenberg es un autor que ha hecho esfuerzos notorios por complementar ambas teologías. Se puede hablar de “teología desde abajo”, es decir, partiendo de Cristo histórico y prestando atención a las realidades histórico-humanas, pero de una manera que sea complementaria a la “teología desde arriba”, es decir, el concepto de Cristo como el Logos, como el Hijo de

In my journey and evolution as human being and minister, I have tried to synthesize the social justice-oriented and charismatic approaches in my intellectual journey and pastoral practice.⁷ In terms of healing, which is the theme of my project thesis, I also have tried to draw from the strengths of both these seemingly opposed expressions to serve the people of God more effectively. I have seen the need to carry out the ministry of healing with a focus on social impact, not looking solely at physical cures, but also at meeting the needs of spiritual, mental, and emotional areas and considering the politics and social implications⁸ of this ministry. A *holistic vision* of healing is essential.

I strongly affirm that my topic is central to Christianity even as the pastoral practice of healing can have many expressions in different churches. Throughout the Bible, the topic of salvation is central. Salvation is connected to different cases of healing⁹ of the body, mind, or spirit. Especially in the gospels, we can observe very clearly how the ministry of Jesus is concentrated mainly on two activities: the *preaching* of the Kingdom of Heaven and the *healing* of different types of diseases, including the release of evil spirits¹⁰. If we remove Jesus' healing ministry from the gospels, we would

Dios, el Mesías, el Cristo, que generalmente enfatiza las realidades espirituales y morales en las que están inmersos los seres humanos. Wilhem, Pannenberg, *Teología Sistemática*, Vol. II, (Madrid: UPCO, 1996), 324-327.

⁷ From my first university studies, I noticed a clear inclination toward synthesis. Having a natural inclination towards the humanities, I set out to do studies in chemistry, physiochemistry, biology, microbiology, etc. to make a synthesis between science and faith. Trying to reduce the polarization between the different theologies in Latin America, I also had specialized in biblical studies and social teachings in the church.

⁸ Due to the vastness of my theme, the social and political analysis will be just mentioned as part of the holistic vision, but this approach must be treated in other studies and analysis.

⁹ This aspect will be widely developed in my chapter on theology, where the topic of salvation is connected to healing based on key biblical texts of the Old Testament and New Testament.

¹⁰ "Jesus preached the Good News, healed the sick, and delivered the oppressed. More than two-thirds of the ministries of Jesus are on healing---and if we must become followers of the Jesus Movement, we must spend time in the ministry of healing. We live in a broken, troubled, sin-sick and dis-eased world, no different from Jesus' time. There is need, as ever before for the healing of mind, body and spirit." Winfred B. Vergara, *Evangelism thru Healing and Deliverance*. (Originally presented as a Workshop in Evangelism Matters held at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Cleveland Heights, Ohio. March 16, 2018)

be left with a Christology that shows Jesus as an excellent Rabbi who provides good teachings about God's love and love of neighbor. Such teaching is good, but in my view, if we disconnect salvation from the healing aspects of the work of Jesus, we contribute to and promote the decline of churches and ultimately facilitate the post-Christian era in which we live, especially in “developed” countries. Tragically, in many places Christianity has become an ideology seen at the same level as other ideologies and a religion at the same level as other religions with nothing of *newness of life* to offer. Christianity without an appreciation of healing is in danger of being a philanthropical club promoting social activities, following religious rituals and meaningless 'traditions' that many times must be followed mechanically.

The COVID-19 pandemic also has confirmed the necessity of a holistic approach to healing that takes account of new needs and new challenges as they arise. In my view, the mass media’s choices about which health professionals and politicians to spotlight has promoted stories that feed fear and concerns about the virus. Those selections often contribute to drug abuse¹¹ and mental illness rather than looking for solutions that promote the best practices of dedicated doctors and research which offer patients personalized approaches that have proven to be safe and effective. In talking with my congregants, neighbors, and others, too often public policy makers have chosen to use a “one size fits all” treatment strategy. Many physicians in the United States, and

¹¹ Over 81,000 drug overdose deaths occurred in the United States in the 12 months ending in May 2020, the highest number of overdose deaths ever recorded in a 12-month period, according to recent provisional data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Accessed October 22, 2021, [Overdose Deaths Accelerating During COVID-19 | CDC Online Newsroom | CDC](#)

specifically here in Tulsa, Oklahoma, now advise their patients to simply go home and return when their disease worsens. This approach, allowing the virus to replicate, has resulted in many unnecessary patient deaths due to inadequate treatment.

The different social and political areas linked to healing show the importance of looking at healing at this time. One thesis cannot address all of these issues. My proposal for an *act of ministry* in this thesis would provide a stronger foundation and opportunities for a better understanding of the phenomenon of healing and also provide a better platform to offer healing initiatives in a wider context. This thesis is an exploration of how a minister and his congregation can develop the foundation, motivation, and practical capacity to offer a holistic approach to healing as a service to meet the needs of an area's people. Central to this thesis will be the *thesis statement* that I will lay out in the next paragraph and use as a guideline throughout this thesis.

The problem I wish to address in my ministry project is the feelings of hopelessness in people, especially Latin-American people experiencing emotional and spiritual sufferings, lack of meaning in life, physical illness, and difficulties of being cared for by qualified doctors and appropriate medical facilities. My thesis statement is that facilitating healing prayer using a holistic approach toward the phenomenon of healing will contribute to healing individuals and families and build vital and evangelizing communities. I believe that a healing service linked to Holy Eucharist provides an appropriate atmosphere to become a fruitful act of ministry.

Section Two: Description of My Thesis Project

Many people in my communities do not have the resources or medical insurance to pay for care in high-tech hospitals. Prayer for the sick can open doors for them to improve their health. Particularly to help those most in need, I want to facilitate a project centered in prayer which is the greatest resource for us Christians. This resource is the sacrifice of Christ on the cross who is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Those sins which became wounds and affect our daily life could be healed as the prophet Isaiah prophesizes.¹² I also want to keep an eye on the social implications of the gospel as well as the individual impacts, but I am aware that is a vast topic that will need to be tackled in other studies. For now, my purpose is to facilitate a 'sacred space' that will help believers to have faith, to alleviate their pains and diseases, to find in the gospel a meaning in human suffering, and of course, to recognize the importance of prayers for doctors, prayers for success in the treatments, and openness to receive healing through alternative medicine in combination with an adequate diet since many illnesses come from eating habits. In this way, people will have a firm platform to seek solutions to their problems with a hope transcending all human reality including, of course, all kind of diseases, whatever their causes.

This thesis project will be based on the proposal of a concrete act of ministry, which is a healing service held once a month for three consecutive months in the framework of the Sunday Eucharist. The Eucharistic service follows Rite II of the Book of Common Prayer in Spanish. The concrete moment of prayer for the sick comes after

¹² Cfr. *Is 53,5. By His stripes we are healed.*

Holy Communion. People who desire prayer make a second row to be anointed with the blessed oil. I am aware that every Eucharist has curative moments but it is necessary to facilitate a specific healing service once a month that serves as a platform to practice the phenomenon of healing. My proposed approach requires teaching the congregation to create a spiritual atmosphere open to healing in a context where the Christian assembly plays an important role.

At this point, I do want to emphasize the centrality of Holy Eucharist and that as Holy Sacrament is always curative, whether the celebrant is holy or unholy, worthy or unworthy, or wise or foolish, because the healing comes from Christ, the source of our salvation. The great bishop and doctor of grace, Augustine of Hippo formulated a beautiful statement to save the sacraments from the heretical Donatism that was introduced into the churches of North Africa in the fourth century. Donatism argued that only the “pure ministers” were the qualified celebrants to offer the sacraments to the God’s people. The statement is well known even in our day as *Ex opere operato*.¹³ Since in my description of my project of healing I clearly note that the key element in this act of ministry is the minister who is linked to Christ and acts in *persona Christi*, it is important to keep in mind the statement mentioned above from Augustine. This theological grounding provides a solid foundation to encourage priests to be open to perform healing services because too often a stereotype exists that only ‘holy’ people can do prayers for

¹³ In my research, I found this clear statement that can be applied to all the sacraments: “No minister has the Spirit in such a way that he can bestow it; rather, any minister, holy or unholy, can confer the baptism of Christ: He himself, and yet not himself; he himself by power, they by their ministry. They performed a service in baptizing; the power of baptizing remained in Christ.” Augustine simply refuses to engage in polemics about who has the purer ministers, arguing that the power of baptism comes not from the baptizer but from Christ. This separation of power from service in baptism developed into doctrines concerning *ex opere operato* effectiveness and ministry in *persona Christi*.” Kimberly, Belcher, *Ex Opere Operato and Sacraments of Faith: A Trinitarian Proposal. Worship*. 2016;90(3):225-245. Accessed October 19, 2021.

healing. Yet we are aware that we are ministering not under our merits and own sanctity but under the merits and holiness of Christ. Of course, we as ministers cannot neglect our spiritual life and morality. Hopefully, this Augustinian statement would encourage not only priests, but also their congregations. I will develop these considerations further in the chapter dedicated to the steps and practices of the act of ministry and new learning.

Through the liturgical course of the Eucharistic service¹⁴, I believe there are special moments where the healing phenomenon is most likely to occur. The initial salutation, passing through the forgiveness of sins, the lessons, sermon, and the moment to offer the peace to each other can all be healing. Most significantly, healing can occur at the consecration when we are renewing the graces that come from the Holy Sacrifice of Christ on the cross, the invocation of the Lamb of God who take away the sins of the world, when we present ourselves to receive the holy communion, and finally, at the quiet moment after communion when we can ask God with a humble attitude for holistic healing. It is important to train the congregation to recognize that post-communion moment of prayer with an atmosphere of faith and solidarity for the people who are asking for their prayers to be generated. It is also important to emphasize that the healing prayer for the sick is not limited to physical healing but extends to other areas such as spiritual, mental and emotional healing that leads to self-esteem, and freedom from hatred and resentment.

¹⁴ The *Book of Common Prayer* in Spanish contains the Eucharist Service Rite II which I used in the healing services. The order is a little bit different than the current English version, because it keeps the penitential rite at the beginning, after the initial salutation. From my experience, that is helpful to healing service. Cfr., *El Libro de oracion comun*. (New York: Church Publishing, Inc., 1989), 273-287.

During the practice of this proposed act of ministry, the presbyter and the healing team (if one exists) will pray for each person through the laying on of hands and by anointing them with consecrated oil while the congregation prays and sings appropriate songs. The congregation needs to be prepared and educated so that they are not only curious spectators but also a supportive community of prayer. The use of holy oil is not the only way to ask God for healing. Spontaneous or written prayers by the priest or his team during the healing prayer moment could also be used.

While conducting my practice of ministry, I kept a monthly journal with notes about the healing Eucharist Service, music, number of participants, continuity of participation, and feedback from the bishop's committee or Vestry. After the three sessions of prayer of healing in the context of the Holy Eucharist service, I surveyed and conducted a focus group with people in the congregation of San Miguel Odessa, TX, and Espiritu Santo of Tulsa, OK. Thirty people were surveyed in each church; and there were twelve participants in the focus group in each congregation. The results obtained were analyzed using a phenomenological approach appropriate to the study of healing.

I chose to use Lynn Underwood's Daily Spiritual Experience Scale (DSES) as part of my evaluation. The questions from the DSES, used in hundreds of studies and projects, can be used to find the relationship between prayer and healing effects in this act of ministry. I will explore the responses to sixteen simple questions that invite us to become more aware of experiences such as deep peace, joy, sense of inner strength, and giving and receiving love (healing). *Spiritual Connection in Daily Life* offers an excellent guide, and I will use these questions to try to measure the "healing process" in the congregations. I received the permission of professor Underwood to use the scale in

Spanish to research the congregations studied. A phenomenological approach is the most appropriate method to evaluate this work as we see in Chapter Three which is dedicated to methodology. I used interviews and focus groups of people participating in the services, asking them to tell stories about the impact of this holistic healing approach with Jesus as Divine Physician. The analysis of the outcomes is important to measure in my qualitative research to show the validity of this project. I expect to show the connection between the Eucharist as fulfillment of spiritual life and the fruits of healing in a holistic approach.

I contend that my act of ministry will achieve four outcomes of this study: First, a holistic vision of the phenomenon understood by participants; second, benefits and validity of healing prayer; third, common language about the healing phenomenon between the participants; fourth, the fruits of healing prayer including joy, peace, and inner strength, which could be developed in a continuous process of their maturation in individuals, families, and vital and evangelizing communities.

Other outcomes could come from my act of ministry, but do not necessarily need to be measured or evaluated in this study. Those secondary outcomes include: the participants will have a deeper capacity to deal with the different kinds of pain (not just physical, but emotional and spiritual); the congregation will have more opportunities to invite friends and family members to join the services; the congregation will have more opportunities to become a vital and evangelizing community with social impact; and the participants will be open to making deeper commitments in the congregation's life and in their social contexts, as we see happening in the Scripture narratives about healing.

The act of ministry I propose will be a new element to attract more people to the congregations. From my experience in other faith communities where I have served, these new faith-filled offerings attract and engage new believers and, in many cases, those people are committed to following a process that begins with a healing and continues as they become more involved in the life of the congregations. Such testimonies promote a healthy community, willing to bring the healing of Christ to different aspects of their everyday life.

Section Three: Thesis Overview

Chapter 2 describes my context at San Miguel, Odessa, Texas, and Espiritu Santo, Tulsa, Oklahoma. I describe and analyze the demographics of these communities with respect to ethnic groups, education, health system, and income. The income is higher in Odessa than it is in Tulsa for the Latino community because many Latinos work in the oil fields in Odessa. The pollution in Odessa will be described as a dangerous issue that affects the health of the community generally, but Latinos are directly affected because many of them work that industry. The dangers and the health of Latinos relate directly to my topic of healing.

Tulsa is a city in a metropolitan area with a population that has recently grown to over one million. This allows greater economic development, but at the same time creates more social problems to solve. In Tulsa, I will describe the different phases of life of different generations. The most important findings are that one of the largest groups in the area surrounding Espiritu Santo are people aged 25-39. Knowing this offers insight as to how to be more attentive to those around the church in that age group. At the end of

the chapter, I look at my findings and the growth of my congregation amid the decline of the Episcopal Church. All this information is linked to the topic of healing.

Chapter 3 explains my overarching methodology which uses the three phases of see, evaluate, and act. I will use a phenomenological methodology because the healing experience is not calculated in numbers but is evaluated through qualitative research. In this chapter I argue that the appropriate methodology is phenomenology because the experiences of healing are happening in the soul, the mind, and feelings. Of course, physical healing is the easiest to evaluate in a quantitative way, but my research is of a holistic approach. These experiences are valuable resources and reliable data for the research of my project.

Chapter 4 describes and analyzes the different approaches to healing in different churches in Latin America. Mainline churches promote healing in socioeconomic ways while charismatic churches promote spiritual healing but with an emphasis on physical healing. In this chapter, I describe my observations and a synthesis between both extremes. I also will analyze other factors in today's society such as hyper-consumerism, liquid modernity and the importance of a holistic approach.

In Chapter 4, I will also analyze the data collected through surveys and focus groups to demonstrate the benefits of my project which is healing prayers after communion. I utilized The Daily Spiritual Experience Scale (DSES). DSES as a qualitative instrument which aligns with my efforts to measure the phenomenon of healing as a part of the spiritual journey of the participants. When I compared both congregations studied in this project, I found more similarities than differences.

In Chapter 5, I develop my theological reflection. I propose the dynamic cycle called *Mysterium Salutis* consisting of three elements: Salvation in Christ, the human being who is the object of salvation, and the construction of a healthy community. This chapter has four sections. In the first section I explain the importance of *Mysterium Salutis*. I look at the biblical foundations of the Old and New Testament using the original Greek and Hebrew languages. In the second section, I discuss the Christological aspect of my pastoral proposal which is Salvation in Christ as the fundamental message of Christianity. The third section is dedicated to exploring anthropological implications. Finally, the fourth section develops the ecclesiological and liturgical aspect of the *Mysterium Salutis*.

Chapter 6 connects my project thesis with scientific evidence in the areas of psychiatry and philosophy. I explore both fields using an existential approach, in a dialogical way rather than forcing them to confirm the validity of my thesis. In section one, I analyze Viktor Frankl's Logotherapy (healing by meaning) which he extracted from his experience in a concentration camp during World War II. This looks at the will of sense and the ability to choose, which we can also call freedom, to find meaning in suffering. Frankl's work also helps look at the search for meaning in the face of adverse situations as he faced all kinds of suffering in a concentration camp. The second section in this chapter looks at Gabrielle Marcel's reflections on the metaphysics of hope, The hope Marcel refers to is an element that provides spiritual and intellectual strength to alleviate or overcome illnesses and problems in ordinary lives.

In chapter 7, I describe new learnings and practice for the act of ministry. Evaluating the outcomes, doing theological reflection, and looking at Frankl and Marcel,

suggests a new understanding of the phenomenon of healing and offer it to other faith communities. Having this new comprehension, I talk about the validation, benefits, and challenges of my project. Finally, I looked at proposals for future research and the avenues opened by this project.

Chapter 8 will describe some conclusions regarding the possibilities, richness, and limitations of the Latino culture on the topic of healing. I will also look at the appropriateness of my methodology to the phenomenon of healing, including its strengths, weakness, opportunities, and its threats. The holistic approach of healing is one of the purposes of this project and I am glad to continue to promote this vision pastorally and through theological reflection with the hopes that others may explore this topic in new ways. Finally, I discuss the eucharistic element as part of the Liturgy where theological reflection is the culmination, and my act of ministry is presented within a Eucharist service after communion.

Chapter 2

My contexts: San Miguel, Odessa, TX and Espiritu Santo, Tulsa, OK

I identify myself with the prodigal son of Rembrandt. It makes me see my situation as a human being as broken, in need of forgiveness and embraced by God, and makes me see the restoration that God does in me, not only physically, but especially in the spiritual. – Omar¹⁵

My thesis project arose because of my analysis of the city of Odessa, Texas, and the city of Tulsa, Oklahoma. I previously was the pastor of San Miguel in Odessa and am currently serving as Latino missionary in Tulsa. I strongly believe the phenomenon of healing is linked with growth in these congregations and rooted in the contexts of the cities studied in this project. The first section of this chapter will describe the city of Odessa, Texas, to provide a general background about the city. The second section will describe key aspects of the city of Tulsa, Oklahoma. The third section will discuss *grosso modo* church growth and healing phenomenon in my churches' communities.

Section One: Odessa, Texas

The city of Odessa, Texas is in the Permian Basin¹⁶ which is the heart of the West Texas oil and gas production. The largest cities in the Permian Basin are the cities of

¹⁵ Focus group.

¹⁶ The Permian Basin is located in West Texas and the adjoining area of southeastern New Mexico. It underlies an area approximately 250 miles wide and 300 miles long and includes the Texas counties of Andrews, Borden, Crane, Dawson, Ector, Gaines, Glasscock, Howard, Loving, Martin, Midland, Pecos, Reeves, Terrell, Upton, Ward, and Winkler. The name derives from the fact that the area was down warped before being covered by the Permian Sea and the subsidence continued through much of the Permian period; consequently, it contains one of the thickest deposits of Permian rocks found anywhere. TSHA (Texas State Historical Association). Accessed August 25, 2018, <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/ryp02>

Odessa and its sister, Midland, which is about 16 miles away on Interstate 20. Midland is mostly inhabited by people working in managerial and administrative activities in the oil industry, while Odessa is mainly inhabited by laborers in the oil field.

To understand this area, we need to begin by examining the social and demographic characteristics of the local community. The first area to examine is a three-mile radius around San Miguel Church. The 2018 estimated population within the study area is 86,934. The 2023 projection would see the area grow by 710 to a whole population of 87,644. The US population's racial-ethnic diversity is continually increasing in this area. The racial-ethnic make-up in 2018 was 56% Latino-Hispanic, 36% White, 6% African American, 1% Asian, and 1% Native American. The Asian (Non-Hispanic) population is projected to remain about the same over the next five years. White (Non-Hispanic) population is projected to decline by -.07% over the next five years. Black/African American (Non-Hispanic) is projected to remain about the same over the next five years. Hispanic or Latino population is projected to grow by 0.6% over the next five years.¹⁷

The level of educational attainment of a community's adult population is an important indicator of its opportunities and challenges. The educational attainment level of adults has declined over the past few years. It is projected to decline over the next five years by -0.3%.¹⁸ The overall educational attainment of the adults in this community is lower than the state.

¹⁷ Accessed September 12, 2018, <https://pr.dfms.org/study/StaticPDFs/4/4553-3528.pdf>

¹⁸ Accessed October 15, 2018, <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/page/studying-your-congregation-and-community>

Looking at Odessa as a whole, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that the unemployment rate for Odessa rose from 0.0 percentage points in March 2019 to 2.6%. For the same month, the metro unemployment rate was 1.2 percentage points lower than the Texas rate. The unemployment rate in Odessa peaked in January 2010 at 9.7% and is now 7.1 percentage points lower. From a post peak low of 2.5% in July 2018, the unemployment rate has now grown by 0.1 percentage points.¹⁹

While Odessa's primary economy is fueled by oil, the city is also a regional transportation hub. Family Dollar and Coca-Cola both have distribution centers in Odessa since the city is located on a major trade route between the US and Mexico.

In my three-mile study area, the current yearly estimated average household income is \$71,069. The average household income is projected to grow by 30.6% to \$92,846. The estimated per capita income for the current year is \$25,115. The per capita income is projected to grow by 30.2% to \$32,700.

The church of San Miguel Arcangel is in the poorest area of downtown Odessa. Many of its members belong to the lowest income group. There are members outside of the study area, but many of them also belong to the lowest income levels in the region. Yet there are about 20% of the members who belong in the medium and high medium income segments of this area.

The phase of life changes reflects the age profile of a community. On average, it takes two children per woman to replace both the mother and father. If the percentage of the population under 20 is declining as a percentage of the total, it is likely that the

¹⁹ Accessed July 29, 2018, <https://www.deptofnumbers.com/unemployment/texas/odessa/>

community will see an increase in the population of seniors possibly due to a decline in birth rates and a low mortality rate. In this study of the area, children 17 years of age and younger are declining as a percentage of the total population. Considering the other end of these phases of life, adults who are 55 years of age and older are increasing as a percentage of the total population. In summary, it may just be that the community is aging since as children grow up, they tend to leave but the parents remain.

During six years of my ministry in the congregation of San Miguel, the church has served the needs of families of Odessa and some other cities²⁰ in the Permian Basin, helping them through their hopes, hardships, and challenges. Around 40% of the parishioners are involved in some aspect of the petroleum industry. It is easy to say that oil is the life's blood of the community. Good or bad economic times can be measured by the health of that industry. As a result of the oil industry different kinds of illnesses have arisen, specifically allergies and some types of cancer which have originated by the exploitation of the natural resources in the oil industry.

The people of the region suffer from different types of irritant-based sensitivities. One of the most damaging catalysts is the extraction of oil. It is ridiculous and outrageous to observe the extraction of petroleum in Odessa, Texas, even on school grounds and very close to housing units. Another issue of concern is the dangerous effects on health²¹ of new technologies that drill into the subsoil, including "fracking" that uses chemicals that

²⁰ Since my installation as vicar of The Episcopal Church of San Miguel, the following cities in the region are looking for services: Andrews, Crane, Midland, Kermit, McCamey, Pecos and Hobbs in New Mexico. The services required are mainly baptisms and confirmations.

²¹ Accessed May 10, 2018, <https://draxe.com/dangers-of-fracking/>

have been proven dangerous, with multiple side effects²² such as causing cancer in humans and releasing pollutants dangerous to the atmosphere. For instance, sulfur dioxide, which is released during the flaring of gas, can contribute to asthma and heart attacks.²³ The Permian Basin urgently needs air quality monitoring to help protect public health.

Another issue in the Permian Basin is the use of the water. Water is one of the key ingredients facilitating the boom. In the Permian Basin, like many other oil and gas producing regions, water is scarce and over allocated. A new report by Ceres, a Boston-based environmental non-profit organization which has focused on sustainable investing and business, found that more than 70 percent of the Permian's oil wells are in areas of extreme water stress, which means over 80 percent of surface water and shallow groundwater has been already allocated.²⁴

During my six years of ministry in the city of Odessa, Texas, I observed different issues within the congregation, as well as city. One of them is the need for a healthy lifestyle. This has to do with the need for good doctors and a less bureaucratic and expensive medical system that addresses the basic and urgent needs of the large

²²A new study out today from Johns Hopkins in Environmental Health Perspectives revealed associations between fracking and various health symptoms including nasal and sinus problems, migraines and fatigue in Pennsylvanians living near areas of natural gas development. The study suggests that residents with the highest exposure to active fracking wells are nearly twice as likely to suffer from the symptoms. Accessed June 5, 2018, <https://www.ecowatch.com/health-dangers-fracking-1986527671.html>

²³Accessed July 23, 2019. <http://www.environmentalintegrity.org/news/air-pollution-from-growing-oil-and-gas-industry-texas/>

²⁴In the Permian Basin, 1.1 million gallons are needed to frack each well – which isn't much compared to other parts of the country (wells in the Bakken use twice as much, and in Texas' Eagle Ford Shale each well averages over 4.4 million gallons). But the sheer number of wells in the Permian means the gallons add up, and with more wells biting into the shale every day, Ceres projects water use in the Permian to double by 2020. Accessed July 23, 2019, <http://www.hcn.org/blogs/goat/permian-basin-in-new-mexico-and-west-texas-americas-newest-fracking-boom>.

community in Odessa, Texas. I often saw members of the congregation that had to travel to border cities of Mexico to find a solution to their illnesses by finding better medical options in hospitals and health agents in other places which often resulted in significant financial costs. I have also observed that many oil field jobs have high stress levels generating in psychosomatic illnesses in many people both in the congregation and in the community. The predominant type of food is 'fast food', processed food and modified products (GMO) for food preparation both in homes and restaurants. I majored in food engineering so I know well the many factors involved in this area.

All of these factors tend to contribute to unhealthy life patterns in people and families, and consequently in the overall community. Observing these dynamics as a pastor and community leader I have decided to act through small initiatives that could offset these trends. Among other initiatives are promoting healthy eating, seeking to heal family relationships, and of course a specific moment to pray for those who are sick, whether physically, emotionally, or spiritually, in an appropriate moment in the Eucharist.

Section two: Tulsa, Oklahoma

On July 1, 2018, the population of Tulsa was 400,669.²⁵ The population for the 2020 Census was 413,066 for the city itself, almost 12,000 more than estimated a year earlier. According to estimates released by the U.S. Census Bureau on July 1, 2020, the population in the seven-county Tulsa Metropolitan Statistical Area was 1,006,411, a

²⁵ United States Census Bureau, Accessed July 29, 2021, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/tulsacityoklahoma,US/RHI625217#RHI625217>

0.7%, or 7,063 persons, increase over the estimate for 2019²⁶. The Tulsa metropolitan area has officially joined the one million population²⁷ club, making it eligible to compete for economic development projects, according to area officials.

The current racial and ethnic make-up of the Tulsa area is white 54.9%, Hispanic or Latino 15.8%, two or more races 7.8%, black 15.1%, American Indian 4.3%, Asian 3.3%, Pacific Islanders 0.1% The median income for households in the Tulsa metropolitan area is \$44,577, while the mean household income is \$68,425. By comparison the median household income for the United States is \$57,652. Per capita income for Tulsa metro area is \$28,823, while the per capita income for the US is \$31,177.²⁸ The Tulsa Metro area is constantly monitoring the air quality given the increase in population. A violation of ozone standard has a design value is 0.071 ppm or greater. The last ozone alert was June 28th of 2019.

I also want to look at a study of an area that is a fifteen-minute drive from Espiritu Santo Episcopal Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma. The 2019 estimated population within the study area was 436,785. The estimated 2024 growth projection is 0.6%. The ethnicity of the population for 2019 was White 55.2%, Latino 17.6%, Black 11.7%, Asian 4.5%, Pacific Islander and Indian American 5.4%.²⁹ The Asian (Non-Hispanic) population is projected to remain about the same over the next

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Accessed August 10, 2021, [Tulsa area population tops 1 million for first time, Census Bureau data says | Local News | tulsaworld.com](https://www.tulsaworld.com/news/local-news/tulsa-area-population-tops-1-million-for-first-time-census-bureau-data-says-local-news-tulsaworld.com)

²⁸ Accessed August 10, 2021, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/tulsacityoklahoma,US/HSG010218>

²⁹ Accessed August 10, 2021, [Know your Neighborhood \(datastorycloud.com\)](https://datastorycloud.com/neighborhood)

five years. The White (Non-Hispanic) population is projected to remain about the same over the next five years. The Black/African American (Non-Hispanic) population is projected to remain about the same over the next five years. The Hispanic or Latino population is projected to have a small increase over the next five years. The estimated *per capita* income for the current year is \$37,000, while the *per capita* income projected for 2023 is \$40,230.

A powerful way to envision demographics is by following a generation through its phases of life. This is because there are, in a general sense, common life experiences at each phase of life. The different groups or generations in my area of study are: Generation GI (1901-1924), Generation Silent (1925-1945), Generation Boomer (1946-1960), Generation X (1961-1981), Generation Millennial Y (1982-2004), and Generation Homeland Z (2005-2025).³⁰ An interesting piece of data to consider in our pastoral programs is that the largest group in our area is between the ages of 25 to 39³¹ years old; many are millennials and we need to know how to attract them especially in the Latino culture. Most of them are married and with stable work but away from the church life.

Finally, in my study area there is valuable information from the 2019 *Quadrennium*

Project Survey conducted by MissionInsite of US Religious Preferences, Practices and Beliefs.³² Some important data included: Personal Growth is 7.9%, while US average is 7.3%, Family Support and Intervention Services is 10.8%, while US average is 10.5%, Community Involvement and Advocacy Programs are 15.8%, while US average are

³⁰Accessed August 25, 2021, <https://pr.dfms.org/study/StaticPDFs/9/9696-0232.pdf>

³¹Accessed August 25, 2021, [Know your Neighborhood \(datastorycloud.com\)](https://datastorycloud.com/know-your-neighborhood)

³² Ibid.

13.8%, Community Activities or Cultural Programs are 12.8%, while US average are 12.9%, Religious Spiritual Programs are 18.6%, while US average are 18.1%. Notably, the outcomes in my study area are above the US average which means it is a good area of opportunity to develop programs with a potential for success. The meaning of some data collected in this section gives us opportunities to create pastoral programs. For instance, the large group of people ages 25 to 39 years old living in this area challenges us to create new programs and, additionally, to continue to offer programs for their kids and also for them, taking into account their schedule and needs.

Section Three: Church Growth and Decline in the Cities of my Contexts with Respect to the Phenomenon of Healing.

The Great Commission given by Jesus in Matthew 28:18-20 is the starting point in the growth of Christianity as documented in the book of the Acts and throughout church history. Growth in the church is a blessing while the decline of the church is likely to be a huge loss for our mission and goal of being church. However, the loss of our mission is a loss for our communities, as well.

In the churches of my context, it is very noticeable that biblical churches are experiencing fast growth compared with mainline churches. In many cases, the mainline churches' growth is declining, which is observed in the congregations. In the specific case of the Episcopal church, there are excellent studies about the recent declines and growth in attendance and membership of the Episcopal Church and other mainline churches, which have been well documented. In the next paragraphs, I will describe my observations on this issue.

Decline in Episcopal churches, unfortunately, is a reality and the reasons I found most frequently include:

- The Episcopal Church has failed to retain many its members' children over the years.
- Overall, one quarter of Episcopal congregations have a membership that is 50% or older than 65. In three quarters of Episcopal congregations, over half of the membership are age 50 or older.
- Among Episcopal churches where over three quarters of the members are age 50 or older, 68% are declining and only 8% are growing.
- Equally clear is that few Episcopal congregations know how to reach out to millennials with a message that is radically different from what they hear daily from the secular media.

A crucial measure is Sunday attendance. Long term estimates of attendance are particularly difficult to do. The further ahead one looks, the more imponderables arise. However, certain concrete things can be said.

Sunday attendance began to drop markedly at the start of the century. The worst years of decline were 2005-2010, but serious decline is ongoing. TEC has shrunk, on average, by around 15,000 per annum since 2010. That is a drop of over 20% between 2010 and 2019.³³

³³ David Goodhew, "The Episcopal church in 2050", Covenant, January 11, 2021, Accessed August 27, 2021, [The Episcopal Church in 2050 – Covenant \(livingchurch.org\)](https://www.livingchurch.org/the-episcopal-church-in-2050/)

Correlations in growth were found for pastors who were called "effective preacher," "evangelistic," "hard worker," "knows how to get things done," and "is friendly and engaging." The lowest correlations in growth were found for "knows the Bible and theology," "cares about people," "good liturgist/worship leader," and "is a person of deep faith."³⁴

I am approaching the topic of healing with a holistic attitude that encompasses the body, mind, emotions, and spirit. Such healing is an element in growing churches and is linked with churches that were seen as “vital” or even “evangelistic.” Healing is connected with the sense of belonging to a community with common interests. These correlations will be important to support my thesis that healing facilitates personal and congregational growth.

³⁴ Accessed August 27, 2021, <https://virtueonline.org/growth-and-decline-episcopal-church>

Chapter 3

Methodology for a specific time of healing prayer after Communion within the Eucharist.

After the sessions of healing prayer, I am feeling more healed in my emotional life that helps me to be aware of the need to better control my impulses. —Hortensia³⁵

Chapter three will explain the first phase of the overarching methodology for my project *See, Evaluate and Act*. This methodology has been very effective in the work of pastoral theology in many churches in Latin America, especially in mainline churches, since the early eighties until the present. My project also uses a phenomenological approach due the nature of the topic researched. In my study the phenomenon experienced by a particular group of individuals³⁶ is the experience of healing. Another important element of my project is that the research itself is collaborative; it looks for effective processes for collaboration and encourages participation by emphasizing problems and concerns.³⁷ All these components of my project are typical of the proposal of Creswell's transformative postmodern type.³⁸

This first phase is To See in which analysis and methodology play an important role. In section one of the present chapter, I discuss my project of ministry in relation to the phenomenological methodology. In section two I present the basic elements that

³⁵ Focus Group.

³⁶ John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 3rd Edition (Los Angeles: Sage, 2013), 78.

³⁷ Creswell, *Qualitative*, 37.

³⁸ Creswell, *Qualitative*, 38.

make up the design of my project as it relates to the qualitative research and phenomenology that I will use in the healing which is my act of ministry. Finally, I conduct an initial analysis using the methodology of a SWOT analysis of my specific project. I will present the basic elements that make up the design of my project as it relates to ministry.

Section One: A Phenomenological Methodology

As previously stated, my general approach in this project is *See, Evaluate, and Act*. This framework will provide guidance as I develop the stages for my act of ministry. Along with this framework, I will use a phenomenological methodology, and a multi-method for my qualitative research.³⁹ Phenomenological methodology is the appropriate tool when investigating social realities dealing with the experiences of human beings because experiences (phenomena) are valuable resources and reliable data, collected through interviews, surveys and focus groups which are proper for phenomenology as qualitative method.⁴⁰

In all research, evidenced-based data plays an important role in being able to measure the reality that we wish to study. The experience of healing in humans is a qualitative experience and not subject to a purely quantitative analysis. Quantitative

³⁹ “Qualitative research is a multi-method in focus involving an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them”. John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 2nd edition (London: SCM Press, 2016), 28.

⁴⁰ “Telling of stories and the accurate recording, transcription and analysis of this data forms the heart of the qualitative research enterprise”. Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology*, 37.

information is data that can be measured directly and can be objective information. On the other hand, qualitative analysis measures the prevailing opinions and experiences of people relating to a particular phenomenon. Therefore, utilizing only quantitative analysis in my research would be insufficient, as well as inappropriate, as I try to measure the movements of the human spirit in relation to the Spirit of God. The German philosopher Edmund Husserl, the founder of phenomenology, considers phenomenology as a philosophy, an approach, and a method. He emphasizes reflexive intuition⁴¹ in describing experience as it is lived and, from that point of view, all distinctions of experience should be free of assumptions and prejudices. Instead, we should seek the theoretical foundations that allow the creation of a secure base to describe the experience and get the reality of the world as it is.

The existentialist philosopher Martin Heidegger believed that people are not only thinking entities isolated from the world around them, but that their own interaction with the environment is a core aspect of their being. To explain this concept, he uses the term *Dasein*.⁴² For Heidegger, *Dasein* is the human being who must be reconceived in an altogether new way, as “being-in-the-world.”

Both these German philosophers, Heidegger and Husserl, define phenomenology as the study of phenomena (or experience) as they are presented and the way they are lived by people. Both authors, each offering in their own way an existentialist

⁴¹Ludwin, M. Landgrebe, Edmund Husserl. Encyclopedia Britannica Online, Accessed January 25, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Edmund-Husserl>

⁴² The German Philosopher, Martin Heidegger, in his most important work *The Being and Time*, talks about the human existence as “Dasein” or “Being-in-the-world”. Martin, Heidegger, *El ser y el tiempo*. (México, D. F.: Fondo de cultura económica, 2016), 62-72.

approach,⁴³ give greater value to the same experiences that every human being has in a specific society than to individual thoughts without connection to a social group or a concrete history.

In this project of healing from a holistic vision, it is clear that I am not studying things or static objects. I am studying people who live out specific experiences or phenomena. These human beings are in either a process of evolution that can be humanizing⁴⁴ or, on the contrary, in a process of devolution that can lead to dehumanization. In both cases, this process clearly reflects the degree of subjectivity and peculiarity that is proper to the human being.

Within this existential framework, I sought to focus intentionally on the participants' experiences. These experiences are valuable resources and reliable data for my project. The collection of this data for analysis will be interviews, focus groups, and surveys. I have also ensured that the questions explore people's actual experiences and not merely their knowledge about the topic of my study. Specifically, I am asking them about their experiences with different modes of healing in their daily lives. However,

⁴³ "Existentialism: The philosophies dating from about 1930 and the mid of 20th century in continental Europe that have in common an interpretation of human existence in the world that stresses its concreteness and its problematic character." Nicola Abbagnano, *Existentialism*. Encyclopedia Britannica Online, Accessed January 25, 2019 <http://www.britannica.com/topic/existentialism>

⁴⁴ The French philosopher Gabriel Marcel, one of the best exponents of 'Existentialism', offers a brilliant proposal. In his masterpiece 'Homo Viator', the author argues that the human being is in a continuous process of humanization or, on the contrary, this same human being is in a continuous risk of losing his way and being dehumanized. In this sense he speaks of the dangerous situation of ethical values where a human being would be condemned to an infra-animal existence. The human being is more humanized to the extent that he (she) lives through the limitations of his(her) existence, through his fears and sufferings, but not isolated but in relation to others, walking with others. Gabriel Marcel, *Homo Viator, Introduction to the Metaphysics of Hope*, trans. Emma Craufurd and Paul Seaton (South Bend: St. Augustine Press, 2010), 148-158.

researching pastoral theology in some situations using qualitative research is not easy and requires a level of sophistication in the interpretation of results. Swinton and Mowat comment:

“Qualitative research assumes that the world is not simply ‘out there’ waiting to be discovered. Rather, it recognizes ‘the world’ as the locus of complex processes within which human beings struggle to make sense of their experiences. Identifying and developing understandings of these meanings is the primary task of qualitative research. Qualitative research assumes that complexity underlies the taken for granted. Its intention it is to uncover and interpret such complexities in order to better understand and act upon and within any given situation.”⁴⁵

My qualitative analysis will use focus groups, group surveys, individual surveys, and interviews to try to capture the extent and complexity of the phenomenon. As we learned above, these means are appropriate to phenomenological methodology. The phenomenon I will study is an aspect of the participants’ relationship with God, specifically how their spirituality relates to an increase in different areas of health.

Section Two: Basic Elements of the Ministry Design and Qualitative Research of the Project

My intention in designing an act of ministry is to provide an important element in Christian communities that might serve to trigger other curative processes in people and to facilitate the process of discipleship. This act of ministry can be a great help in the formation of evangelizing communities which will be leaven in the larger community.

⁴⁵ John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology*, 29.

When designing this project, I have had in mind three objectives. The first is to provide a healing experience for believers in a community context. Second, I want to measure this experience through surveys, interviews and focus groups, by using well-designed instruments, which would also help participants develop a holistic vision of healing. The participants invited to this study understood the elements of their participation in the project. (See Appendix 1). Third, I want to relate experiences of healing with growth, following Jesus in discipleship as a call to Christian maturity in order to build a community that was both evangelized and evangelizing.

When designing the act of ministry, I chose a eucharistic context because this offers a stable platform. Eucharist is an environment where especially Latino people are already accustomed and is one of their strongest traditions in developing faith and trust in the goodness of God. In the Eucharist, we encounter Jesus as the Divine Physician of bodies, hearts, and souls. I argue that every Eucharist service in itself is healing, as I did in the introductory chapter talking about the different parts of the celebration and how we can be aware of the benefits of healing brought to us by Christ's actualized sacrifice at every moment of the Eucharistic celebration. The liturgy, as a human act to glorify God the Father through the Son by the action of the Holy Spirit, also follows a complete cycle where the human being as believer becomes the 'glory of God' as St. Irenaeus says: "*The glory of God is the living man.*"⁴⁶ This phrase in terms of my project is the human being in a process of holistic healing. I'll develop these considerations on my chapter dedicated to theology.

⁴⁶ Luis F. Ladaria, *Antropología Teológica*, (Madrid: Verbo Divino, 1987), 62.

All eucharists bring believers to experience and update the act of Jesus' redemption and salvation on Calvary. However, it is also important to raise awareness among people and congregations about salvation (healing) which is offered for free by God through concrete pastoral actions. This project both raises this awareness and my act of ministry tries to facilitate this experience.

I planned and carried out the act of healing ministry in the context of the Eucharist during three sessions in the congregations studied. My objective was to facilitate an experience often enough to be able to collect data and then process the results of people's experience with this phenomenon. This ensured that my project design met my first objective.

A single session of healing prayer would not have been enough to collect the necessary information and achieve the objectives of this study. I studied two congregations, both the Church of San Miguel Archangel of Odessa, TX, and Espiritu Santo Episcopal Church in Tulsa, OK. In total, six sessions of healing prayer after Communion were performed in the context of a Eucharist. In addition, other experiences of prayer were requested by individuals at the end of the services and I also prayed at special times for individuals that asked me because of their emotional or physical sufferings.

I met the second and third objectives for my project design with the surveys, interviews, and focus groups. The participants were able to get out of a reductionist view of the topic of healing to a broader vision which also includes emotional, spiritual, and social wellness. In particular, the focus groups helped to build community and created a shared language of the studied phenomenon.

Using Creswell's framework for qualitative design, my project would be classified as transformative and postmodern.⁴⁷ Creswell proposes five different interpretative frameworks, as well as the philosophical principles associated with each. The philosophical areas used to categorize different qualitative designs are ontological, epistemological, axiological and finally methodological.

The ontological aspect has to do with the being and the nature of reality that is being studied. In Creswell's framework, the researcher, the community, and the individuals must participate in an interaction that allows them to know the phenomenon being studied in the dynamic of subject-object. In my project, with the two congregations participating in the study, I have communities that are specific entities and not just metaphysical ones. I, as a researcher, have generated a dynamic of interaction that has collected results of both objective and subjective reality.⁴⁸

This study will help us better understand the epistemological⁴⁹ element which is how we know the reality studied. I, as a researcher, have had to create different means to find results that are valuable and significant to my project. In this sense, the surveys, interviews and focus groups have served to generate the knowledge and to validate it.

⁴⁷ Cf. John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 3rd Edition (Los Angeles: Sage, 2013), 36-37. for an analysis of different interpretive frameworks used in qualitative inquiry.

⁴⁸ Creswell, *Qualitative*, 36.

⁴⁹ "The epistemology of qualitative research relates to the particular theory of knowledge that underpins this approach. In looking at the epistemological underpinnings of qualitative research we will be focusing on the central question, 'How do we know what we know?' How we answer this question will determinate how we look and what we see within the research process. It is therefore a question of vital importance." John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 2nd edition (London: SCM Press, 2016), 31.

This second aspect is something that I will develop further in the chapter dedicated to the validation of my thesis.

The axiological element refers to values and the role they have in obtaining the knowledge of the studied reality. In this sense, I, as a researcher have had to be careful to respect what is valuable in the participants' experiences. I have had to try not to "contaminate" their experiences and responses with my own tendencies or inclinations. However, during the sessions of prayer, I promoted some which I consider to be important and which would help to increase participants' receptivity to the act of ministry. Also, I promoted an attitude of faith and humility in prayers addressed to God to ask for healing. Before starting the focal group, I also encouraged participants to maintain confidentiality if any of the participants shared personal experiences. I also asked them to refrain from talking about topics that did not have to do with the study.

This framework of research not only studied a static reality, but also a reality that is evolving. Thus, it must also be questioned in a dynamic way. The comments made by my thesis advisor were very valuable in leading me to add a question that challenged and looked at potential problems in the research. The question was asked in a focus group in order to obtain results not only from individuals but also from the community.

This important question that problematizes and interrogates participants' understanding of their reality was, "What should be my attitude before God if I did not obtain the requested or desired healing?" This question problematizes the study and at the same time opens up new possibilities for knowledge of the phenomenon studied. In this sense, the questioning or problematization of the reality is very useful in developing knowledge. In fact, most of the answers indicated that people held similar views, but

some were surprisingly contrary. This helped my project become more self-critical and self-aware and consequently increased my knowledge of the studied phenomenon. After reviewing a qualitative work's ontological, epistemological and axiological components, I see the importance of a methodology or methodologies working together to discover how to expand or increase scientific knowledge gained from the project. I, as a researcher, have seen the need to use a combination of methods because of the nature of my study.

My research is pastoral theological in nature. I am not interested in merely speculative research in order to increase doctrinal or intellectual knowledge in the topic of research. My study is a type of research that primarily aims to increase pragmatic knowledge through a specific act of pastoral ministry. However, in this study, I also sought to increase more theoretical knowledge about healing through theological reflection. To do so, I will develop personal intuitions in my chapter dedicated to theology.

Section Three: Brief SWOT⁵⁰ Analysis of My Project

Another important tool and methodology well known in the business world is a SWOT analysis, and this section will apply this tool to my project. I strongly believe that a proposal for an act of ministry could be a good contribution to pastoral work with individuals and even provide for the growth and maturation of the Christian communities.

⁵⁰ SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis is a framework used to evaluate a company's competitive position and to develop strategic planning. SWOT analysis assesses internal and external factors, as well as current and future potential. Will Kenton, "Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat (SWOT) Analysis". Investopedia, accessed in November, 9, 2021. <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/swot.asp>

However, that same proposal could lack any impact in relation to its broader context by not having an overall vision that considers the social context, with its possibilities, weaknesses and obstacles. Therefore, an important part of my initial analysis of this pastoral proposal is a SWOT analysis to look at the phenomenon of healing through the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats in relation to the larger context.

One of the strengths of this project is that a holistic approach to all areas of the human person can be a trigger for the growth and maturation of a Christian community. Another strength of this project is that it is based on a biblical interpretation that is rooted in the history and tradition of the Church from its origins that considers both its human aspects and a spiritual approach to the sacred texts. I see several opportunities in relation to this project. This region of the country in which I am currently ministering is called *Bible Belt*.⁵¹ The faith of the *Bible Belt* is open and sensitive to this topic of healing. At the same time, I expect the development of this project to allow for openings in the missionary efforts of the congregation to reach more people and the predominantly fundamentalist theology of this area will allow me opportunities to educate people in a more holistic approach to healing. I have seen pastorally how this healing work can help

⁵¹ “The term gained popularity and began to be used to name the region of the southern U.S. states in the popular media and in academia. In 1948, the *Saturday Evening Post* named Oklahoma City the capital of the Bible Belt. In 1961, geographer Wilbur Zelinsky, a student of Carl Sauer, defined the region of the Bible Belt as one in which Southern Baptists, Methodists, and evangelical Christians were the predominant religious group. Thus, Zelinsky defined the Bible Belt as a region stretching from West Virginia and southern Virginia to southern Missouri in the north to Texas and northern Florida in the south. The region that Zelinsky outlined did not include Southern Louisiana due to its preponderance of Catholics, nor central and southern Florida due to its diverse demographics, nor South Texas with its large Hispanic (and thus Catholic or Protestant) population.”

Matt Rossenberg, “*The Bible in the United States*,” ThoughtCo. Accessed March 11, 2019 <https://www.thoughtco.com/the-bible-belt-1434529>. Another interesting comprehension of the *Bible Belt* is as: *Religion of born-again faith in a fundamentalist view of the Bible*. This approach is given by Robert P. Ericksen in a recent article. Ericksen RP. “Stereotypes, Politics, and Religion in the American Bible Belt”, 1960-2019. *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte*. 2019;32(2):242-263. Accessed October 8, 2021.

a congregation grow and develop in a harmonious way, ultimately building a vital and evangelizing community. I experienced this growth in the congregation of San Miguel Archangel in Odessa, Texas, where I served as Latino missionary for six years.

I have also observed two weaknesses in this proposal. First, depending on lay people to follow through on this project will be difficult. When I left the community of San Miguel, the healing service did not continue because the next priest was not interested in this project. Unfortunately, this healing ministry needs to be developed under the ministry of the priest within the structure of the Eucharistic service. If the priest has no interest, this ministry is difficult to promote and develop in the congregation. Another weakness is the danger of falling into fundamentalism, where healing is seen as something magical. A consequence of this is that those who have received the benefit of healing, could be not committed to their own faith development, serving in a specific Christian community.

This project presents various opportunities for our society and our churches today. We live in a society where many people are sick, with not only physical, but also emotional, mental, and spiritual infirmities. Helping people find meaning in those different areas is a tremendous tool for growth in our congregations. Offering healing ministry as a pastoral practice in Christian communities in this larger context is a tremendous opportunity for a healing ministry. A healing ministry can open doors for evangelism, as well as help to develop Christian maturity and the growth of the congregation. Healing as an act of ministry is intimately connected with other moments in the growth and maturation process. Recently, the Episcopal Church has been promoting a process of maturation and growth through a project called *The Way of*

Love.⁵² The connections with my project are especially with Turn, Pray, Worship, Bless, Go (as evangelism) and Rest (as breath, recharge and healing). This program is also impacting the Latino communities within the Episcopal church.

I have already mentioned that a possible threat stemming from this effort is to fall into reductionism in the sense of focusing only on the physical aspect of healing. Other threats could be fundamentalism and modernism. The latter is as dangerous as the others, because it categorically denies the healings performed by Jesus, taking them as only symbolic actions. Another threat, stated in Pauline terms, is the “flesh” attitude in the believers. The spiritual gifts given by God for the common good⁵³ and community development can be used also in an egoistic way. On some occasions and in certain places, I have seen how individual carriers of these gifts use them to feed their ego and even secure economic gain. As we can confirm, those kinds of issues happened here in *Bible Belt Zone* through some *Prosperity Gospel* preachers and healers. Healing gifts can be misused in this way.

⁵² The Way of Love is a way of life. More than a program or curriculum, it is an intentional commitment to a set of practices. It's a commitment to follow Jesus: Turn, Learn, Pray, Worship, Bless, Go, Rest. *The Way of Love*, The Episcopal church, Accessed January 7, 2019 <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/way-of-love>

⁵³ “Pero la edificación de la comunidad es posible solamente si los miembros de la comunidad se aman verdaderamente, si aceptan poner los dones y frutos del Espíritu recibidos para beneficio y utilidad de la misma. La edificación no es un fruto y consecuencia de los carismas en sí, sino de los carismas en cuanto animados por el amor”. Alberto Moreno Casas. “Los carismas al servicio y unidad de la Iglesia. Estudio Exegético Teológico de 1 Cor 12, 4-11”, (S.T.L. Thesis, Pontifical Gregorian University, 2004), 77.

Chapter 4

Analysis of My Act of Ministry

I think my reaction would be anger and frustration if I didn't receive healing. – Maria⁵⁴

This chapter will contain two sections. In the first, I will describe the phenomenon of healing in relation to the Latin American and wider contexts. In the second section, I will analyze the questions I asked and the answers I obtained through surveys, focus groups and interviews. I will also compare the two congregations that I studied. This comparison will include commonalities and differences in the two congregations, as well as the implications for my project.

Section One: The Act of Ministry in Relation to the Latin American and Wider Contexts

To start this analysis, it is worth noting that the common background for all Latin American people is the Spanish-American Roman Catholic Church⁵⁵. Now, analyzing what has happened in the Latin American churches in recent decades in the practice of healing ministry, I observe two positions that tend to go to extremes. The first position exists in some types of Pentecostalism⁵⁶ within Protestantism as well as the charismatic movement in some sections of the Roman Catholic church, but more often in the

⁵⁴ Focus group

⁵⁵ “Most of us were born within that church and still belong to it. Others were Protestants from the time of birth. Many, born Roman Catholics, are now Protestants. Still others have no ecclesiastical connection whatsoever. But still somewhere in our common background, there stands the Spanish-American Roman Catholic Church.” Justo L. Gonzalez, *Mañana, Christian Theology from Hispanic Perspective*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 55.

⁵⁶ “Todas las historias de pentecostalismo latinoamericano comienzan con el “despertar” asociado con el nombre del misionero Willis C. Hoover, la Iglesia metodista y la ciudad de Valparaíso, en Chile y continúan con Francescon y las Asambleas de Dios en Brasil. Luego el pentecostalismo se multiplica se diversifica y se expande, y desde la década de 1950 se presenta como el rostro popular del protestantismo en América Latina. Algunos hablan de 65 millones de pentecostales al fin del milenio pasado.” José Miguez Bonino, *Rostros del protestantismo latinoamericano* (Buenos Aires: Nueva creación, 1995), 58.

evangelical churches that have promoted a literal reading and simplistic interpretation of the Scripture.⁵⁷ Their congregations or parishes have addressed the issue of healing using interpretations from some biblical texts that are not in keeping with a critical exegetical approach, as in the different Literal Genres of the Bible or the exegetical methods such as paying attention to a passage's *Sitz im Leben*.⁵⁸ The churches that have fallen into a kind of fundamentalism sometimes "demand" from God a "constant campaign" of miracles of healing. For example, some Pentecostal churches consider physical healing as one of the fundamental pillars⁵⁹ of their theology. In my research, I found healing as synonymous with salvation and a central part of theology as I will develop in my chapter five on theology. The problem, however, is that when searching for healing in these churches, there is a predominant focus on physical healing, thus omitting the areas of emotional, moral, and social healing.

As Isaac Newton stated in his third law of motion, "For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction." In my analysis, I see many leaders and theologians in the historic churches taking positions contrary to those of the charismatic churches. In the interest of orthodoxy, social and scientific study, they have promoted an extremist

⁵⁷ "La lectura fundamentalista parte del principio de que, siendo la Biblia la Palabra de Dios inspirada y exenta de error, debe ser leída e interpretada literalmente en todos sus detalles. El fundamentalismo tiene tendencia también a una gran estrechez de puntos de vista, muchas veces se niega al diálogo con una concepción más amplia de las relaciones entre cultura y fe." Pontificia Comisión Bíblica. *Interpretación de la Biblia en la Iglesia* (Citta del Vaticano: Librería Editrice Vaticana, 1993), 63.

⁵⁸ "A term employed by German Form Critics and one difficult to translate exactly into English. It denotes the social context or 'life setting' in which a narrative emerged. The point being made is that items in the OT can only be understood when they are related to the culture and social life of ancient Israel. The character of the social situation determines the style of the communication. In NT scholarship critics try to relate sayings of Jesus both to the *Sitz im Leben* of the Church in which they were transmitted and to the *Sitz im Leben* of Jesus' ministry in which they may have originated." Oxford Biblical Studies Online, Accessed April 30, 2019. <http://www.oxfordbiblicalstudies.com/article/opr/t94/e1778>

⁵⁹ "El énfasis casi exclusivo en la "cura divina" o "sanación" caracteriza a algunos movimientos pentecostales más recientes y al neopentecostalismo mismo. Miguez Bonino, *Rostros*, 156.

reaction that has rejected the supernatural and miraculous aspect of the character of Jesus of Nazareth as Son of God and thaumaturge. Therefore, healing rarely has been experienced in their ecclesial communities. Through the so-called historical-critical method, as well as radical streams of liberation theology in Latin America, some churches have "demythologized" the biblical narratives where thaumaturgical acts of Jesus occur. Here, I am referring to some of liberation theology's expressions in Latin America that took a "Marxist-Leninist" option. They made the class "fight" their objective in which, by radically following the Marxist matrix, they dispensed with the teachings of the Gospel to focus only upon economics and socio-political struggle. On the other hand, there were some expressions of liberation theologies that promoted a mature incarnation in economic, social, cultural, and political scenarios as we can see in the conclusive document of *Conferencia General del Episcopado Latinoamericano y del Caribe*,⁶⁰ but especially in chapter two of this referenced document. In my project, I will take into account the social, economic, and political aspect of healing as a holistic subject. However, because my study is broad, I mention them only as part of the holistic reality of healing. These mentioned areas lend themselves to further investigations.

Now, I'll contextualize my project in the postmodern age in which we are living in this globalized world. Scholars say postmodernism started in the late 20th century and continues into this early 21st century, bringing major changes in our society. The French philosopher Gilles Lipovetsky masterfully describes this era:

"Postmodernity represents the precise historical moment at which all the institutional brakes holding back individual emancipation disintegrated and

⁶⁰ V *Conferencia General del Episcopado Latinoamericano y del Caribe*. (México: Ediciones CEM, A.R., 2007), 42-68.

vanished, thereby giving rise to the expression of individual desires, self-fulfillment and self-esteem. The great socializing structures have lost their authority, the great ideologies are no longer productive, historical projects no longer inspire people, the social field is no longer anything other than an extension of the private sphere: the age of emptiness has dawned, but ‘without tragedy or apocalypse.’⁶¹

This convulsive and atomized era, also called postmodernism, has been changing the solid paradigms and structures that ruled the past. In this way, the brilliant Polish-English philosopher Zygmunt Bauman describes these times as:

“The passage from the ‘solid’ to a ‘liquid’ phase of modernity: that is, into a condition in which social forms (structures that limit individual choices, institutions that guard repetitions of routines, patterns of acceptable behavior) can no longer (and are not expected) to keep their shape for long, because they decompose and melt faster than the time it takes to cast them, and once they are cast for them to set.”⁶²

The new frameworks have been disintegrating a holistic vision⁶³ and made it difficult for human beings and society to find meaning, including the safest nuclei of

⁶¹ Lipovetsky, Gilles, *Hypermodern Times*, (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2005), 8-9.

⁶² Zygmunt, Bauman, *Liquid Times, Living in an Age of Uncertainty*, (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2007), 1.

⁶³ In this atomized age in which we live, human beings can know the smallest part of an airplane and be an expert in it, or be expert in a piece of furniture, or a mechanical part in the machinery at their works, but many times those individuals are unable to have an integral vision of the whole. This makes them incapable of facing reality and they can be deceived in many ways. For example. In these times of pandemic. I have noticed that the term asymptomatic was used many times in the main mass media and most of them classified person as asymptomatic or symptomatic people and both transmitting the virus. And then, I as a former student of Microbiology at the University, I took up my notes and I realized how the German researcher Robert Koch did it. He did studies on mice. To see how diseases are transmitted, whether from viruses or bacteria. And there was a clear distinction between a sick mouse and another not. It is, as well as Koch's law was established in 1890 and since then we have a clear statement; when a disease is transmitted there are symptoms, although they can certainly be different modalities of those symptoms as the contemporary research indicates, but finally there are clear signs of sickness. If someone says, they are asymptomatic, you have a scientific basis to not believe it. Therefore, it is important to have some knowledge so as not to be deceived, and not be confused, rather to be able to help other people to open to a holistic knowledge, knowing that it is not easy, but that it could be achieved at least at basic levels. Before modernity an encyclopedic vision predominated, today an atomizing vision predominates. We can no longer go back to the past, but we can take the good things that were achieved. To use another provocative example: in Latin America, all young people studied Etymology and Introduction to Philosophy in high school before the year 2000 but now, very few take the introduction to philosophy, I mean, only those who study philosophy and anybody study

meaning, as families, neighborhoods, and faith communities. Those structures keep the integrity and most noble values of the human being and society. Throughout history it has been shown that societies collapse when these fundamental institutions lose their meaning. These facts have been verified from the times of the Roman Empire to our days, but now is not the time to dwell on that subject. Lipovetsky called this era of post modernism as the hyper consumerist era⁶⁴ that, even as it promotes a predominantly atomized society, has also offered some possibilities of synthesis between the different positions. Churches in Latin America have also found new approaches and new syntheses to positions that were previously seen as contrary. Theology and pastoral practice both have provided some solutions for the reconciliation of extreme positions.

In the past decades, Latin American countries have experienced the development of two ecclesial movements or two streams of spirituality in apparent opposition: the theology of liberation with its interest in social welfare for the poor and the charismatic movement motivating a spiritual renewal of the believers. Yet, there are efforts to reconcile the different elements of these two streams of spirituality. For instance, some congregations have complemented their social action with prayer workshops and interest in developing a deeper spiritual life based on Scripture.

etymology. So, it is not surprising that many young people are lacking critical thinking and holistic vision about society and human being.

⁶⁴ “Asistimos a una inquietante fragilización y desestabilización emocional de los individuos. El hiperconsumo ha desmantelado todas las formas de socialización que antaño daban puntos de referencia a los individuos... de ahí la espiral de trastornos psicosomáticos, depresiones y demás angustias que son la otra cara de la sociedad del bienestar... El bienestar material aumenta, el consumo se acelera, pero la alegría de vivir no camina al mismo ritmo, ya que el individuo hipermoderno pierde en felicidad de vida lo que gana en velocidad operativa, en comodidad, en duración de la existencia.” Gilles Lipovetsky, *Los tiempos hipermodernos*. (Barcelona: Editorial Anagrama, 2006), 130.

On the other hand, many charismatic communities have matured in their understanding of the gifts of the Holy Spirit by developing strong ministries to the poor and needy. Therefore, each group has evolved by integrating new practices in their community life. In addition, the collaboration of different disciplines has created a more complete understanding of healing. Just to mention one of the many examples, the Linn brothers within Jesuit spirituality, following the work of psychologist Erik Erikson, propose a very detailed process for healing in the different stages⁶⁵ of human development, thus creating a holistic approach. Their approach includes healing in all areas of the person, including the spiritual, physical, and emotional well-being of the individual. These pastoral approaches also have had an impact on some churches in Latin America by broadening their understanding of healing and spiritual practice.

Section two: Analysis of Outcomes and Comparison in the Congregations

While exploring various studies of the psychology of religion, I found that Lynn Underwood's work, *Spiritual Connection in Daily Life: Sixteen Little Questions*,⁶⁶ was appropriate for my research, having been successfully utilized in similar works. Her work demonstrates a positive and proportional relationship between spirituality and a life of balance, as well as peace, joy, and healthy interpersonal relationships which align with my project's focus on holistic spiritual healing. (See Appendix 2)

⁶⁵ Matthew Linn, Sheila Frabrant, and Dennis Linn, *Healing the Eight Stages of Life*. (New York: Paulist Press, 1988).

⁶⁶ Underwood, Lynn G. *Spiritual Connection in Daily Life: Sixteen Little Questions That Can Make a Big Difference*. (West Conohocken, PA: Templeton Press, 2013).

Underwood's "The Daily Spiritual Experience Scale" (DSES)⁶⁷ has been an appropriate tool to use in my study because the questions she has developed concern the experience of the human being as a believer in different aspects of life. I have found that the life of spirituality, which could be described as a relationship of friendship or intimacy with God, puts a person into a maturing process that can be described as progressive healing that goes through several stages. This maturation process usually is reflected in all areas of the human being.

The DSES scale is a qualitative instrument which aligns with my efforts to measure the phenomenon of healing as part of a spiritual journey of the participants. Each of the 16 questions of the DSES scale⁶⁸ proposed by Underwood are well connected to the topic of spirituality and health. In fact, this connection was one of the primary reasons for adopting this instrument for my study. Some questions, however, are more specifically connected to my topic of study. These questions⁶⁹ are as follows;

Question 2. Do I feel a connection to all that is life?

Question 3 When I am praying or at other times do I connect with God and do I feel a happiness or elation that raises me up from my daily concerns?

Question 4. What do I find comfort in my religion or spirituality?

⁶⁷ Lynn G. Underwood, "The Daily Spiritual Experience Scale (DSES)," Accessed August 7, 2018. <http://www.dsescscale.org/>. See Appendix 2 for more information.

⁶⁸ Lynn G. Underwood, "The Daily Spiritual Experience Scale (DSES)," accessed August 7, 2018, <http://www.dsescscale.org/>

⁶⁹ Underwood, Lynn G, *Spiritual Connection in Daily Life: Sixteen Little Questions That Can Make a Big Difference*. (West Conohocken, PA: Templeton Press, 2013), 122.

Question 6. Do I feel great inner peace or harmony?

Question 9. Do I feel the love that God has for me directly?

Question 13. Do I feel selfless love for others?

A number of these questions refer to health, even if indirectly. Whereas Question 2 speaks of life and Question 4 speaks of comfort, both deal with a holistic sense of health. Peace and harmony in Question 6 speak of part of health, as well. Question 13's understanding of selfless love is a sign of health in interpersonal relations with others and feeling God's love directly, as in Questions 3 and 9 which are the equivalent of spiritual health and emotional well-being.

At the end of the survey there is a question that is a general synthesis of the sixteen. The answers are 1. - Nowhere close, 2.- Sometimes close, 3.- Very close, 4.- Always near

Professor Underwood provides a scale interpreter for qualitative purposes. The numbers do not matter as much as the experiences, however. The scale could help my study to find some qualitative changes based on the answers.

The same survey instrument using Underwood's sixteen questions was given at the beginning and at the end of the sessions of healing prayer in the two congregations that are included in the present study.

I surveyed thirty people from the congregation of San Miguel Arcangel in Odessa, Texas. I noticed that most people experienced an increase in their relationship with God

through my act of ministry. On Underwood's scale, they passed from a level two to a level four, moving from "sometimes close" to "always near" during the sessions of healing prayer in my act of ministry. These healing prayer sessions were carried out in October, November, and December of 2017. Appendix 2 lays out the sixteen questions in Spanish and English in detail.

In the congregation at Espiritu Santo, Tulsa, OK, I administered the same survey in Spanish using Underwood's questions both before the healing prayer within the Eucharistic service and after the three sessions of healing prayer. Using Underwood's synthesis of the sixteen questions, the congregation of Espiritu Santo took a step forward in their relationships with God from "sometimes close" to "very close" during the sessions of healing prayer in the act of ministry. These sessions were carried out in October, November, and December of 2018.

A comparative analysis of the two congregations yields several observations. The results in Tulsa showed a similar tendency in growing closer to God as did the results from the congregation of San Miguel. Both congregations have the same growth trend in experiencing greater closeness to God in their lives, even if San Miguel showed a growth from two to four and Espiritu Santo showed a growth from two to three in respect to the Underwood scale. The first impression in both congregations is that healing prayer helps to be closer to God and as a consequence to experience his love as a holistic healing sign.

The congregation in Odessa had the stability of a priest as leader (in this case I as Latino missionary) of the congregation for many years before the study. Their results reflected a better reception of this act of ministry due to a more careful preparation and

prolonged teaching before carrying out this act of the ministry. I was the priest in Odessa, TX, for six years. The congregation of Tulsa, OK, did not have the same continuity in the leadership, and did not have a priest who provided a more intentional long-term preparation concerning healing prayer.

Early in my ministry at Espiritu Santo in Tulsa, OK, I proposed my act of ministry to them. This act of ministry, which was the healing prayer after Communion during the Eucharist, was received with a good attitude. I made healing prayer available to all participants in the services; a few people, however, saw the first session of prayer as something unexpected and perhaps not significant to their lives at that time. This small group expressed less receptivity to healing prayer. Therefore, I emphasized in my sermons through different biblical narratives the importance of healing to raise awareness and to further prepare the congregation for this act of healing ministry in future sessions.

In the congregation of San Miguel in Odessa, TX, I conducted the focus group with twelve people on January 30, 2018. This focus group took place a month after the three sessions of healing prayer were completed. I provided three questions for the hour and half discussion: first question was, “*What was your first notion about the topic of healing?*” Most responses are related to physical healings seen on television or told by people attending Pentecostal or charismatic churches. Few others related to miracles that happened in family members or friends. The second question was, “*What image reflects better your experience during the healing prayer sessions? Why?*” The question utilized three images (See Appendix 3) that helped participants connect the subject of healing to their experiences of faith in a different, more evocative way.

The three images shown to the participants in the focus group were masterworks by famous painters that suggested a wide range of emotions and healing experiences. I used *The Return of the Prodigal Son* by Rembrandt, *The Good Samaritan* by Van Gogh, and *Sunflowers* by Van Gogh. For individuals who relate strongly to the visual, the images were a powerful method to connect the phenomena of healing to their own experiences.

The image of Rembrandt's *Prodigal Son* elicited responses from six people. Answers included, "feel the forgiveness of God; "experiencing liberation and availability to forgive my offenders;" "feel confident to confess and acknowledge our sins;" "The experiences into the prayer sessions help me to understand better the holistic way of healing;" and "how my sufferings are cured by the love of God."⁷⁰

The second image *The Good Samaritan* by Van Gogh elicited six responses. The most common answers were that they felt closer to God, experienced peace, comfort, the strength to bear their diseases, and some of them noticed an improvement in their physical condition. Other responses related having experienced protection from God, the confidence to face health problems in everyday life, the forgiveness that participants experienced from God's love, and the ability to forgive offenders.

One of the participants commented: "Yes, I felt the healing of God on my person. I had a surgery days after the healing prayer on me and felt inner peace and confidence to

⁷⁰ Focal group carried out the 30 January, 2018 in the Church San Miguel, Odessa, TX.

face that difficult procedure and thanks be to God, everything was okay, so the prayer helped me to face the moment of hardship.”⁷¹

Another participant told her story, saying: “After the sessions of healing prayer, I am feeling more healing in my emotional life that helps me to be aware of the need to better control my impulses.”⁷² One person testified to a cure of advanced cancer that had been confirmed by specialists at a hospital in Houston, TX.⁷³

Third question was, “*Do you think the healing prayer within the Eucharist has any benefit for you and your congregation? What kind of benefits?*” All the participants mentioned that they saw healing prayer as a positive and necessary practice in the congregation of San Miguel and the Permian Basin zone to build the community and to feed the faith of individual and families.

In the same way as in San Miguel, Odessa, at Espiritu Santo, Tulsa, I conducted a focus group of twelve people and two interviews with the same questions; the only differences were adding a fourth question⁷⁴ and the session duration in the focus group, which was one hour and forty-five minutes long at Espiritu Santo. (These questions can

⁷¹ Focus group with people of the San Miguel, in Odessa, TX. on January 30, 2018

⁷² Focus group with people of the San Miguel, in Odessa, TX. on January 30, 2018

⁷³ Terry Gonzalez a young man, sixteen years old was who experienced the healing of cancer in the upper part of the nostrils, a type of cancer difficult to treat and eradicate. After going being treated on six occasions at a hospital specializing in cancer in Houston, Texas, his parents took him to one of the services and it was there that I prayed for him. At his seventh visit to the hospital for treatment, he was declared free of cancer and to date remains so. After this event, he participated in the church’s confirmation program and he and his family have maintained a relationship with the Church.

⁷⁴ The fourth question was suggested by my thesis advisor Dr. Ross Kane and I gladly accepted as a way to improve my research, as a counterweight question, and to recognize immature attitudes in my research participants. This question was not included in the study at San Miguel, Odessa, TX. This fourth question opened new avenues for my research and I am aware that every congregation could be a different project for research, but for now both projects together help me to research how healing prayer alleviates the sufferings of my people as I stated in thesis statement.

be found in Appendix 3). The focus group was held at Tulsa's St. Dunstan's Episcopal Church on December 7, 2018. At this point it is important to say that St. Dunstan's is the mother church that promoted Espiritu Santo as the new Latino mission in Tulsa Metro Area.

The first question that I asked the Espiritu Santo focus group was, "What was your first notion on the subject of healing?" Among a wide variety of responses, the most frequent dealt with an experience related to physical healing, other responses related to miracles experienced in their families and friends, very few related to have inner peace and the relieving of burdens. The second question was, "What image best expresses your experience during the prayer healing sessions?"

The three images shown to the participants through a projector were the same images showed at San Miguel, Odessa, TX: *The Return of the Prodigal Son* by Rembrandt, *The Good Samaritan* by Van Gogh, and *Sunflowers* by Van Gogh. For individuals who relate strongly to the visual, the images were a powerful method to connect the phenomena of healing to their own experiences.

The Espiritu Santo focus group participants showed more attraction and willingness than San Miguel to use the images in the session. In this way they were linked to the process of spiritual healing for emotional problems and past experiences as they looked at the images. The image of Rembrandt's *Prodigal Son* elicited the most answers with seven. People's responses included, "Experienced the compassion of God; "experiencing inner peace," "feel confident to confess my sins;" and "The experiences into the prayer sessions help me to understand the unconditional love of God."

Omar, one of the participants in the focus group, said, "I identify with the prodigal son of Rembrandt. It makes me see my situation as a human being as broken, in need of forgiveness and embraced by God, and makes me see the restoration that God does in me, not only physically, but especially in the spiritual."⁷⁵

The second image, mentioned five times, was *Sunflowers* by Van Gogh. The main comments regarding this image were, "As an experience to be illuminated by the light of God," "the experience of freedom," "opportunity to open up to the love of God and neighbor," and "the experience of peace and healing."⁷⁶

Margarita, one of the participants, commented with a beautiful analogy, "Sunflowers help me open myself up to the light and greatness of God, to his mercy. The sunflowers are opened fully before the light of the sun, so I also, I would like to be opened up and be fed by the light of God to have life."⁷⁷ Karina said, "The healing is something good and full of peace. The sunflowers remind me of the kind of experiences that heal in all aspects of my life. It is like a trip and *Sunflowers* are the paradise where we go."⁷⁸

The third question to the focus group was, "Do you think that the prayer of healing within the Eucharist may have some benefit for you and your congregation? What are the benefits?" The majority mentioned that they saw healing prayer as a

⁷⁵ Omar, Focus Group on 7 December 2018 in the Church Saint Dunstan, Tulsa, OK

⁷⁶ Laura, Focal Group carried out the 7 December 2018 in the Church Saint Dunstan, Tulsa, OK

⁷⁷ Margarita, Interview and translated by the author 9 December 2018

⁷⁸ Karina, Interview and translated by the author on 9 December 2018

positive and constructive element to build the community and to feed the faith of individual participants. Only two participants said they weren't sure.

With respect to the third question, which is focused on the liturgy, one of the participants made a thoughtful comment: "In my opinion, the proposal of healing prayer for this congregation is a big opportunity to build a healthy community and the Eucharist is the right place to develop this practice." He added "The Eucharist is the moment when the people are most receptive and sensitive to the sacred things."⁷⁹

At this point, I want to analyze and compare the moments lived in each congregation during the act of ministry. At the congregation of San Miguel, Odessa, during the healing prayer moment after communion, I noticed that around 90% of the congregants formed a second row to receive unction with holy oil in a humble attitude. The songs were appropriate to dispose participants to humbly ask for healing. I observed an atmosphere of faith and devotion in the participants since the very beginning of the project. I also observed that the participants approached the healing prayer as not limited to physical healing but to other areas such as spiritual, mental, and emotional healing.

I had less time to prepare for the act of ministry in the congregation of Espiritu Santo, Tulsa, OK. However, I observed a receptivity to create a second row to ask for healing prayer after Holy Communion. Around 60% of those present asked for unction with consecrated oil. The music during the healing prayer moment played an important role in this congregation, and motivated the participants with appropriate songs. I

⁷⁹ Rafael, Focus group December 7, 2018

observed an increasing interest in healing prayer by the participants, and I also observed an increasingly holistic understanding about healing as time went on.

In comparing the congregations, I learned that the role of the presbyter as the minister of healing is important, and his influence is related to the success of this act of ministry. I also learned that every congregation needs to be prepared and educated to become a supportive community of prayer and fraternity. As I note in my analysis, having this act of ministry linked to the Eucharistic service is a strength which is important to use in the promotion of this project. In chapter eight, I will develop this idea when talking about sharing the act of ministry with the wider community.

The fourth question was, “What should my attitude be before God if I do not obtain the requested or desired healing?” This question is important because most people ask to receive physical health and some people are not healed in the way they desire and request. This question is a counterweight question with pastoral importance because it can reveal immature attitudes that are unhelpful for human and spiritual development, and because very often people see healing as a goal in itself more than as an avenue to be united with God.

In addition, this fourth question is key because it emphasizes and opens windows to the importance of a holistic and existential healing that is not merely physical but also emotional and spiritual. Some of the responses from the participants to the fourth question include: “To accept the will of God in an attitude of faith,” “Be open to a Divine Plan that has a broader vision than our narrow visions that are often selfish,” and “I would accept the will of God, even though, it could be difficult to accept, but I would be

open to another type of healing that may be more important to me.” There was, however, only one response to this fourth question that expressed frustration and discouragement in her participation. “I think my reaction would be anger and frustration if I didn’t receive healing.”⁸⁰

The previous answers show more than a 90% positive and mature attitude before the fourth question: “What should be my attitude before God if I do not obtain the requested or desired healing?”⁸¹ There were twelve participants in the focus group and only one of them expressed the possibility of becoming angry and frustrated.

The fact that a single person expressed the possibility of anger and sadness prompted me to propose strategies in my project that help those who may have been harmed in their spiritual life. Therefore, follow up after the sessions of healing prayer with me or the leaders of the congregations is part of a strategy to help these individuals to understand the act of ministry in both a holistic and a mature approach to the spiritual life. In further chapters, I’ll address this issue, especially in Chapter Seven.

For most of the participants from both San Miguel and Espiritu Santo, the fact of living this experience through focus groups and surveys was something that expanded their previous point of view about healing. They entered into a broader understanding of this phenomenon. In fact, the vast majority said that when I first presented the topic of healing, they immediately thought of physical well-being and as magic action. The partial understanding was that healing regards only physical illness.

⁸⁰ Maria, Focal Group carried out on December, 7 of 2018 at Saint Dunstan’s Episcopal Church, Tulsa, OK

⁸¹ I formulated the fourth question in an optimistic and positive way to point the participants toward an attitude of maturity. I wanted to overcome more childish and fundamentalist attitudes.

Some misconceptions were mainly that healing works like a ‘magic action’ and that only ‘holy people’ can pray or receive the gift of healing. In this sense, my project meets one of the objectives I set before the start of the study. I have been able to help people understand the topic of healing in a broader, more holistic, and transcendent way.

Finally, considering the analyzed qualitative data, focus groups that created participation and awareness of the phenomenon, and questions through surveys, I can see an anticipated usefulness to my project. I need to implement strategies to respond to people who do not engage with or understand better the holistic healing approach of my project. In this study, I also sought to increase more theoretical knowledge about healing through theological reflection. To do so, I will develop personal intuitions in my chapter dedicated to theology.

Chapter 5

Theology

*The healing sessions were for me an opportunity to be open to the love of God and to love my neighbor. --Gabriela*⁸²

I will develop this chapter in four sections, in which I discuss my theological reflections on the topic of study. These reflections are based mainly on my original intuitions about the topic of healing. I strongly argue that there is a dynamic cycle that I am naming *Mysterium Salutis*⁸³ consisting of three phases: Salvation in Christ (Divine Healer-Christology), the human being who is the object of salvation (Salud-Anthropology) and the construction of a healthy community (Saludo-Ecclesiology).

I prefer to use the Spanish terms ‘*Salud*’ and ‘*Saludo*’ in the cycle of *Mysterium Salutis* rather than the terms ‘*Health*’ and ‘*Greeting*’ in English, because the linguistic sequence⁸⁴ from Latin to Spanish helps us better understand the dynamic cycle that develops my proposal in this chapter. For this reason, the terms *Salud* and *Saludo* in the cycle of *Mysterium Salutis* are central to my theology, because they are a response to the main objectives of this study, as well as a response to some issues that arise from the analysis of the reality in chapters three and four: specifically, the need for a holistic

⁸² Focus group

⁸³ *Mysterium Salutis* is a Latin expression that means “Mystery of Salvation” that in terms of Pauline theology is God’s loving plan, revealed through Christ in the fullness of time to mankind, and it is the church’s mission to proclaim this message.

⁸⁴ The fact that Latin and Spanish are linked in the same family group of languages facilitates theological comprehension for my proposal.

vision of healing and a synthesis between biblical fundamentalism and socio-humanistic approaches with respect to healing.

In the first section, I deal with both the importance and explanation of the *Mysterium Salutis*. To that purpose, I will discuss its biblical foundations, which are primarily taken from Pauline theology. The expression *Mysterium Salutis* has its roots in the Greek term *μυστήριον* and his proclamation faces opposition from the *Mysterium iniquitatis*⁸⁵, which has been defeated, but the battle will continue until the second coming of the Lord.

I will analyze this mystery of salvation, its connections to the history of salvation and finally present, a brief reflection on the word *salvation* as a synonym for *salud*.

In the second section, I will discuss the Christological aspect of my pastoral proposal; that is, salvation in Christ as the fundamental message of Christianity, a profound and holistic reality, that covers different aspects of the saving work of Christ: redemption, justification, and sanctification.⁸⁶ I will also consider salvation and its connection to the proclamation of the apostolic *kerygma* on the origins of Christianity.

The third section is dedicated to exploring the term *salud* from a holistic perspective. It defines the human being from a theological locus: *homo imago Dei* and *homo capax Dei*. I also include theological anthropology in defining the human being as a union of body, soul and spirit.⁸⁷ I also consider the tripartite elements

⁸⁵ Cfr. 2 Thess. 2,7

⁸⁶ Cfr. 1 Cor 1,30

⁸⁷ Cfr. I Thes 5,23

of the human being as being subject to a continuous process of healing while the individual also finds meaning for his existence.

Finally, the fourth section develops the ecclesiological aspect of the *Mysterium Salutis* in order to reflect on the theological elements of the community as the Body of Christ. I will discuss what is needed to create a healthy community that is built on the *saludo*. This community becomes real through its fraternal relationships and it embodies the love of Christ in a troubled society that anxiously waits for the fraternal love of Jesus' disciples. The testimony of this community must be in solidarity and service to the poor and needy as a sign of the presence of the Kingdom of God.

Section One: The Importance of the Theology that Emanates from the *Mysterium Salutis*.

The *Mysterium Salutis* reveals itself through the history of salvation, in the same way that a small seed develops into a large tree. This revelation starts with the first chapters of the book of Genesis,⁸⁸ until it reaches its maturity in the fullness of time through the person of Jesus Christ.⁸⁹

In this sense, the history of salvation mirrors the journey that humans must undertake. The mystery seems hidden⁹⁰ and is only known through the Holy Scriptures and

⁸⁸ Cfr. "Then Yahweh God said to the snake, 'Because you have done this, Accursed be you of all animals wild and tame! On your belly you will go and on dust you will feed as long as you live. I shall put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; it will bruise your head and you will strike its heel.'" (Gen 3, 14-15)

⁸⁹ Cfr. "But when the completion of the time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born a subject of the Law, to redeem the subjects of the Law, so that we could receive adoption as sons." (Gal 4, 4)

⁹⁰ Cfr. "I, who am less than the least of all God's holy people, have been entrusted with this special grace, of proclaiming to the gentiles the unfathomable treasure of Christ and of throwing light on the inner workings of the *mystery* kept hidden through all the ages in God, the Creator of everything." (Eph 3:8-9)

revealed fully in the person of Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul is both a witness and minister who teaches this revelation; he states,

“And now to him who can make you strong in accordance with the gospel that I preach and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, in accordance with that **mystery** which for endless ages was kept secret but now (as the prophets wrote) is revealed, as the eternal God commanded, to be made known to all the nations, so that they obey in faith: to him, the only wise God, give glory through Jesus Christ for ever and ever. Amen. " (Rom 16:25-27).

In this passage, the role of the Trinity is very clear; the *Mysterium Salutis* manifests the Father as the source of the whole as Jesus Christ, the mystery unveiled by the action of the Holy Spirit through the Gospel's message.

St. Paul uses the term *μυστήριον* on thirteen occasions⁹¹ in his writings, in which he takes up the Jewish apocalyptic that is recounted in the book of the prophet Daniel. The *μυστήριον* is revealed to the prophet Daniel through the night visions⁹² that will help him interpret dreams of King Nebuchadnezzar, with respect to the secrets of what shall come to pass in the last days and the establishment of a kingdom that will last forever. For Paul the *μυστήριον* is not an enigmatic wisdom, but a wisdom whose object is the revelation of a mystery, the secret of salvation accomplished and manifested in Christ, of which Paul, the least of the apostles, has come to be a minister and dispenser.⁹³

⁹¹ Cfr. Rm 11.25; Rm 16, 25; 1 Cor 2.7; Eph 1.9; Eph 3.4; Eph 3.5; Eph 3.9; Phil 2.15; Col 1.27; Col 2.3; 2Thess 2.7; 1 Tim 3.9; 1 Tim 3, 16.

⁹² "The mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision at night and he blessed the God of Heaven" Dn 2.19

⁹³ Cfr. Eph 3:7-9

In summary, in the writings of St. Paul the term *mystery* is recapitulated by the Spanish biblical scholar José O’Callaghan as follows:⁹⁴ 1) It is God's plan to introduce the human being in Christ to the life of the Trinity.⁹⁵ 2) For a long time it was the hidden secret of God. 3) But one day was revealed in and through his son Jesus Christ, through his passion, death and resurrection. 4) From that time the mission of the Church is to announce universally this mystery of love.

Finally, I will present a brief discussion of the word salvation as a synonym for *salud* and the connection to my project. The meaning of *Mysterium Salutis* is translated in English as Mystery of Salvation, and in Spanish could be translated also as Misterio de la Salud (Mystery of Health). Therefore, salvation and health are synonyms. The relation between salvation and *salud* (health) is a key idea in my study. One of the main purposes of my study is to approach salvation/healing from a holistic view, which implies health in all areas of the human being: physical body, emotions, spirit and relationships with society and nature. Therefore, when I am using the terms *salutis* or salvation, they are equivalent to *salud* (health) in all my study, but especially in this theology chapter.

Section Two: The Christological Dimension of the *Mysterium Salutis*.

⁹⁴ José O’Callaghan. *Nuevo Testamento, Griego-Español comentado*. (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1997), 1065.

⁹⁵ When O’Callaghan talks about the concept of Trinity in his summary about the mystery, he thinks in the final stage of the development of this doctrine, as we can learn in the formal summary of Christian beliefs promulgated at the first council of Nicaea in 325 AD. The doctrine of the Trinity was still in very early phases of development and comprehension during Paul’s life.

The saving work of Christ is so deep that Paul experienced the need to make use of different terms to try to explain it. These terms deepen the understanding of this great mystery. For example, Paul describes Christ's work in Ephesians 1:7-10:

“Through his blood, we gain our freedom, the forgiveness of our sins. Such is the richness of the grace which he has showered on us in all wisdom and insight. He has let us know the mystery of his purpose, according to his good pleasure which he determined beforehand in Christ, for him to act upon when the times had run their course: that he would bring everything together under Christ, as head, everything in the heavens and everything on earth.” (Eph 1:7-10)

Although it is not my purpose in this study to examine all the theology that underlies this issue of soteriology, I will explain some terms that I strongly believe are fundamental to understanding this Christological reality and that are directly related to the topic of healing.

I will begin by addressing the term salvation. Salvation is one of the central themes of the Bible in both the Old and the New Testaments. It is one of the themes that runs through virtually all of Scripture. An important aspect for the purposes of my study, is that the root of the verb save (שׁוּׁ; Y-Sh-Ah) in the Old Testament as well as of the verb save or rescue (*sōzō*) and its derivatives, especially the word σωτηρία (*soteria*), in the New Testament have a strong association with the term salvation at the physical level of the human being, more than humans' spiritual well-being.⁹⁶ This approach reinforces the

⁹⁶ "In fact, God is the source of 'Salvation' in the Hebrew Bible the meaning is overwhelmingly physical rather than spiritual, and in this life rather than in some afterlife (Exod. 14:30; 2 Sam 8.6; Pss. 44.3; 144.10; Isa. 59.16; Zeph. 3.17). Despite the fact that in a great majority of the occurrences of the root Y-Sh-Ah in the Hebrew Bible God is the agent of salvation, rarely if ever do you have an unambiguously spiritual nuance. An eschatological sense is of course present in such passages as Ezekiel 34.22 and throughout

emphasis on physical healing which I mentioned in my analysis of the reality of the phenomenon in the past chapters. It also offers evidence against those who ‘demythologize’ the thaumaturgical acts of Jesus.

In the Old Testament, Yahweh is the one who acts to bring salvation; for example, when the people of Israel are freed from captivity in Egypt, they sing and proclaim that Yahweh is their salvation (Ex 15.3). In this passage of Exodus, we can confirm the physical level of salvation that predominates in many texts of the Old Testament. Of course, salvation on the spiritual level is also always considered. In the New Testament, the second person of the Trinity, Jesus the Christ is referred to as the Savior. His very name reveals His identity and mission. It is interesting to discover how the roots of the Hebrew word Messiah (משיח; Mashiach) is connected to the Hebrew word for savior, the one who saves (מושיע; moshi'ah). In this way, the word ‘messiah,’ means not only “the anointed one” or “filled with the Spirit,” but also the possibility of being translated as: "one causing another to be rescued," or “the savior, the rescuer.”⁹⁷

Second Isaiah, but the "salvation" prophesied is the restoration of Israel in its land, not some otherworldly bliss. Even in the New Testament salvation can be physical and this-worldly. In the healings of both the woman with the hemorrhage (Mark 5.34 and parallels), Jesus proclaims that their faith you have "saved" them; most recent translations correctly render the Greek verb *sōzō* "you've made you well"; cf. Mark 3.4; 5.23, 2; 0656; Luke 17.19; Matt. 27.2)." Bruce M. Metzger, "Salvation" in *The Oxford Companion of the Bible*. Ed. Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 669-670.

⁹⁷Another form of this verb is מושיע (moshi'ah). This is the "Hiphil participle" form of the verb. To hiphil verb changes the action of the verb into a causative and would literally be translated as "to cause one to be rescued." To hiphil participle verb changes the action of the verb into active and would literally be translated as "causing one to be rescued" or it can be one who performs the action of the verb which would then be translated as "one causing another to be rescued." The word מושיע (moshi'ah) literally means "one causing another to be rescued," or simply, "rescuer", but this word is usually translated as "deliverer" or "savior." Jeff A. Benner, "Salvation," in Biblical Hebrew E-Magazine, accessed February 22, 2019. <http://www.ancient-hebrew.org/emagazine/045.html>

The name Jesus or Yeshu'ah⁹⁸ in Hebrew, means “Yahweh is salvation,” and is attested in the gospel of Matthew; “She will give birth to a son and you must name him Jesus, because he is the one who is to save his people from their sins” (Mt 1.21). In this text, the linking of his name with Jesus’ mission, that is the salvation of the human being, starts with the most focused element, which is salvation from sin. However, salvation does not stop there. It covers all areas of the human being: spirit, soul and body. Because the Semitic vision of the human being is holistic, salvation is not for only one part of the person, such as the part that is most connected to religion -- that is, the part related to the spirit. Instead, the Hebrew worldview considers the human person as an indivisible whole⁹⁹ and the historical Jesus in the exercise of his mission thinks, feels and acts as a true Hebrew with the same worldview. This section tries to answer the problems analyzed in the previous chapters, which is that some theological approaches identify healing as only a physical healing.

Abounding in salvation is a holistic vision and the basic message of Christianity; in his book entitled *Healing*, Francis MacNutt comments that the idea of salvation in Jesus is that, “Jesus saves us from personal sin and of the effects of original sin, which include ignorance, weakness of will, disoriented emotions, physical illness and death.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ The word יֵשׁוּעַ (yeshu'ah) is a noun derived from the verbal root יָשַׁע (Y.Sh.Ah) which means "relief" in the sense of being rescued from an enemy, trouble or illness. Many translations in the Bibles translate this word as help, deliverance, health and welfare, but most frequently as salvation. Jeff A. Benner, *Salvation*, in Biblical Hebrew E-Magazine, accessed February 20, 2019. <http://www.ancient-hebrew.org/emagazine/045.html>

⁹⁹ "This is precisely how Jesus conceived his mission: The time of the Messiah would be a time of healing, of liberation, of salvation. Because the Hebrews did not think of human beings as being divided into body and soul, but as whole persons, when they spoke of salvation, they thought not only of saving souls but of healing persons. And our person includes our body, our feelings, and our spirits". Francis Mac Nutt, *Healing*. (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press; 1999), 41.

¹⁰⁰ Mac Nutt, *Healing*, 39.

The term, *redemption* is found in the Old Testament through the word go'el¹⁰¹ which has the meaning close to release or rescue. In the *New Testament* the word λύτρον (lytron) has a similar meaning to the Old Testament: the rescue and the ransom price. The latter also has a commercial connotation that was used in those times.¹⁰² In Pauline theology, this term finds its fullness by pointing out that salvation was through the Blood of Christ shed on the cross as the ransom price for our sins. The apostle Peter specifies even more when he says:

"For you know that the price of your ransom from the futile way of life handed down from your ancestors was paid, not in anything perishable like silver or gold, but in precious blood as of a blameless and spotless lamb, Christ." (1 Pe 1:18-19)

The term *justification* (δικαίωσιν; absolve, do justly, make valid), is also a better way to understand the *mystery* of salvation won by Christ. The following definition of *justification* can serve as a basis to better understand this term: "The judicial act of God, by which, on the basis of the meritorious work of Christ, attributed to the sinner and

¹⁰¹ "go'-el (go'el, "redeemer"): Goel is the participle of the Hebrew word gal'al ("to deliver," "to redeem") which aside from its common usage is frequently employed in connection with Hebrew law, where it is the technical term applied to a person who as the nearest relative of another is placed under certain obligations to him. I.e. If a Jew because of poverty had been obliged to sell himself to a wealthy "stranger or sojourner," it became the duty of his relatives to redeem him". Arthur L. Breslich, "Goel" in Net Bible: Accessed February 22, 2019, <http://classic.net.bible.org/dictionary.php?word=goel>

¹⁰² "Rooted in the secular usage of the word, the NT doctrine of redemption draws its meaning from a parallel with the marketplace concept "to buy back", and thus describe the specific means by which the larger salvation concepts may be ratified". Merrill C. Tenney, *Redemption in Zondervan's Pictorial Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967),708.

received through faith, God declares the sinner acquitted of his sin, freed from his punishment and restored as just.”¹⁰³

There are four basic and essential elements in the act of justification that are taught by the Holy Scriptures. Justification includes remission of punishment, restoration to grace, the imputed righteousness of God, and a new legal situation before God.¹⁰⁴ The second element, the restoration to grace is the one that relates to healing, because being restored to the grace from God is intimately connected with the Holy Spirit that generates a healing process in the human person. Restoration of grace produces a desire to do God’s will and as the Holy Spirit fills the believer, he experiences a process of healing in all areas of his life.

Therefore, justification by faith generates and develops a new life in believers, a sense of peace, gratitude, of security and confidence before the Judgment of God,¹⁰⁵ but the Christian will have to be aware that he must persevere to the end for such benefits to have all their healing effect. In this sense the justification starts a process of moral transformation¹⁰⁶ in the believer who is joined to Christ and associated with the people of God in one particular community so that he may reach maturity and persevere until the final day.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ Tenney, “*Redemption*,” 460.

¹⁰⁴ Tenney, “*Justification*,” 461

¹⁰⁵ "Paul now come out as a present reality for all who are of faith (Rom. 5.1), in the sure confidence that at the future court the past verdict of acceptance and amnesty will be confirmed (Gal.5.5; Phil. 1.11; 3.9). In this way the tension of the Christian life ("Already justified...not yet finally 'saved' ") is maintained as a part of Paul's proclamation." Ralph P. Martin, “Justification,” Ed. Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan. *The Oxford Companion of the Bible*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 405.

¹⁰⁶ Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan. 406

¹⁰⁷ " With which you can refine the best to be pure and blameless for the day of Christ. Filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, for the glory and praise of God." Phil. 1:10-11

Another contribution to the Christological dimension of the *Mysterium Salutis* is the pastoral ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. The historical Jesus in his ministry on earth lasted three years as we know from the gospels and the other writings that recount the origins of Christianity. The thaumaturgical activity¹⁰⁸ of Jesus of Nazareth to heal the sick and cast out demons is reflected strongly in the book of the Acts of the Apostles, which recounts that Jesus went about doing good, preaching, healing the sick and healing all who were oppressed by the devil.¹⁰⁹

Said in another way, if we exclude from the pastoral work of healing of the sick in the services that churches provide to their parishioners and this society in general, we could omit a high percentage of the pastoral actions of Jesus in his ministry. On the contrary, if churches promote pastoral actions to develop ministries of healing, that could have a positive effect on the growth and maturity of our faith communities.

In fact, as we have already mentioned, the gospels are full of examples of people that were healed and liberated by Jesus in his ministry. Continuing with the Acts of the Apostles which narrate part of the origins of Christianity, we see how many people were healed from their diseases by the apostles, who carry out different kinds of services that promote growth in the Christian communities.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ This word comes from the Greek θαὔμα ἔργον "wonder" and "work", and it literally means "who works wonderful facts."

¹⁰⁹ "You know what happened all over Judaea, how Jesus of Nazareth began in Galilee, after John had been preaching baptism. God had anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and because God was with him, Jesus went about doing good and curing all who had fallen into the power of the devil. Now we are witnesses to everything he did throughout the countryside of Judaea and in Jerusalem itself ..." Acts 10,37-39

¹¹⁰ Cfr. Mk 1: 29-31; Acts 3:1-10; Acts 5: 12-16; Acts 6:1-7

In the final part of this section, I would like to point out something important about healing and liberation. The first three centuries of Christianity was the *Golden Age* that has left a *paradigm* for all successive Christian communities. Particularly because Christianity existed in the hostile world of the Roman Empire in which Christians suffered persecution, what we see narrated in the book of the Acts of the Apostles and Pauline letters until the time of the conversion of the Emperor Constantine is that the preaching of the apostolic kerygma was always accompanied by *signs of power*. This is noted by Dr. Ramsey Mac Mullen professor at Yale University in his book *Christianizing the Roman Empire: A.D. 100-400*.

"The reason why pagans accepted the Christianity was not primarily doctrine (our emphasis today) but a very simple encounter with power: 'Our God, the one true God, is more powerful than your gods, who are the demonic forces that hold you down.'"¹¹¹

The Christians of that time understood and lived in relation to these signs of power as an ordinary part of their faith life; this is attested to in the acts of the martyrs and in the earliest Christian writers such as Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Cyprian and Tertullian who all confirmed those signs of power. For instance, Irenaeus asserts that:

"Some people truly *incontestably and truly* drive out demons, so that those very persons often become believers."¹¹²

The Christology discussed in the last paragraphs with respect to the themes of salvation, redemption and justification attempts to respond to issues that I have identified in the analysis of my act of ministry in chapter three. Particularly, there is a need for a

¹¹¹ Francis, Mac Nutt, *Healing*. (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press; 1999),46.

¹¹² Mac Nutt, *Healing*, 47.

holistic vision of healing as well as a need to promote a synthesis and reciprocity between the different theologies and pastoral practices on the topic studied. In this way, the theology I am discussing here attempts to look for the holistic vision of the phenomenon of healing and reciprocity between the fundamentalist theologies of healing in some charismatic and Pentecostal churches and the ‘scientific and humanistic’ approach in some mainline churches. My efforts try to reconcile theologies in apparent opposition, the *old battle* through the history of theology between the *Christology from above* versus *Christology from below*. In my view, there is reciprocity between them. The two Christological methods are not mutually exclusive, but inclusive. In this regard, I want to mention the German theologian Jürgen Moltmann, one the most brilliant exponents in modern times about this topic in his book *The Crucified God*.¹¹³ In my concluding chapter I’ll follow up on some of his proposals.

Section Three: Some Considerations of Theological Anthropology.

First, I want to examine some reflections about the human being found in the Constitution of Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*. The following phrase: "Every human being remains to himself an unsolved puzzle"¹¹⁴, assesses the complex nature of the human being. The human person is a true enigma, or in the words of my topic, man is a *mystery* to himself and others who live with him. To try to solve this *mystery* needs a holistic, teleological¹¹⁵ and theological approach because human approaches are not enough. In this regard, Severino M. Alonso, a Spanish theologian, comments that "The

¹¹³ Moltmann, Jürgen, *The Crucified God*. 40th Anniversary Edition. (Mineapolis: Fortress Press,2015)

¹¹⁴ *Gaudium et Spes* 21

¹¹⁵ The *telos* concept, was originated in ancient Greece, especially in the philosophy of Aristotle and denotes a goal, or the end. It is “the final cause” as used in thomistic philosophy.

solution to this 'problem' and the clarification of his own being cannot come from the human sciences, not even from philosophy. Much less, biology, nor from psychology. The best of the human being, his mystery, his deeper reality and his true identity are unreachable by scientific methods.”¹¹⁶ If even the different disciplines that help to understand the mystery and complex constitution of the human being are not enough to solve the huge task, we should return to the biblical texts with their long tradition and interpretation. In my view not any single interpretation of the bible is enough, especially if we look for an interpretation in continuity. In *Biblical Theology of Old Testament and New Testament*, the accomplished biblical scholar Brevard Childs unites both testaments through principal thematic and ideas¹¹⁷ from Old Testament to the New Testament following the path of *Hermeneutics of Continuity*¹¹⁸, which is in my view, the safest way to solve the huge mystery of the human being as *Imago Dei*. The biblical text that best synthesizes hermeneutics of continuity is the following: “Therefore, every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.” Matt 13:52. Pope Benedict XVI has repeatedly called for a “hermeneutic of continuity” rather than the too prevalent “hermeneutic of rupture”. If not, we could risk and must pay the consequences of an interpretation of the human being’s nature more in accordance with our ‘democratic’ and egotistical needs that has been shaping the post Christendom era in which we are living.

¹¹⁶ Severino, M. Alonso, *Proyecto personal de vida espiritual. Ejercicios espirituales o Ejercitación en el Espíritu*. (Madrid: Publicaciones Claretianas, 1997), 17.

¹¹⁷ Brevard Childs, *Biblical Theology of Old Testament and New Testament*, (London: SCM Press, 1992), 29

¹¹⁸ To understand this term better in Benedict, Roland Millare recently wrote a brilliant essay about The Hermeneutic of Continuity and Discontinuity between Romano Guardini and Joseph Ratzinger: “The Primacy of Logos.” *Nova et vetera*. 2020;18(2):521-563. Accessed November 19, 2021.

In my view, one of the approaches that best attempts to solve the *mystery* of the human being is synthetized by the phrase *homo imago Dei*. The human being, man or woman, is the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26-27).¹¹⁹ In this regard, Alonso comments, "This is his greatness and its maximum originality. *The image and likeness* mean true image, a living and real reflection of God. For this reason, fundamentally, the man is the *glory of God*. Because glory, in the strong sense of the word, is the same divine nature projected in the human being."¹²⁰

These considerations lead me to the famous statement of St. Irenaeus: "*The glory of God is the living man*."¹²¹ This sentence is loaded with a very clear vision of what God wants for the human being, an abundant life¹²² as John also attests in his gospel. The *living man*¹²³ is the man open to God's Spirit. The man who is in a continuous process of maturation producing the fruits of the Spirit, or stated in terms of my topic of study, this *living man* is the one who is a healed person. Or, better said, this *living man* is the human being who has entered in a process of healing in all areas of life, in body, soul and spirit.

The *living man* reflects the glory of his Creator because of the image and likeness of Him. The *living man* is the same that has entered a serious process of continuous

¹¹⁹ "God said, 'Let us make man in our own image, in the likeness of ourselves, and let them be masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven, the cattle, all the wild animals and all the creatures that creep along the ground. 'God created man in the image of himself, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them.'"

¹²⁰ Alonso, *Proyecto*, 22.

¹²¹ Luis F. Ladaria comments the very famous phrase of St. Irenaeus in *Adversus Haereses*, Libro IV, 20, 7: "La gloria de Dios es el hombre viviente; la vida del hombre es la visión de Dios" and also the complementary affirmation from the same St. Irenaeus: "La gloria del hombre es Dios; ahora bien, el receptor de la operación de Dios, de toda su sabiduría y de toda su potencia es el hombre" Luis F. Ladaria, *Antropología Teológica*. (Madrid: Verbo Divino, 1987), 62.

¹²² "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full." Jn 10.10

¹²³ Many English translations of St. Irenaeus' statement translates as: "The glory of God is man fully alive.", but this translation in my view has many limitations, and could have different interpretations.

conversion, shedding selfishness and lusts for a constant renewal and focus each day in Christ. This *living being* is man or woman who seeks the fullness of his humanity in Christ. This human being, is the man or woman who, according to St. Paul is the *new man*, created in the likeness of God in righteousness and holiness of the truth.¹²⁴

Another anthropological consideration to decipher the *mystery* of the human being is the Latin statement “*homo capax Dei*.” According to the Aristotelian-Thomist tradition, between the knowing subject and known object there must be a certain “ontological correspondence,” that is, the one and the other are not strangers or absolutely unlike. In the case of the truth “*homo capax Dei*,” the biblical foundation is once again in the text of Genesis “*God said, 'Let us make man in our own image, in the likeness of ourselves...God created man in the image of himself, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them. ' (Gen 1 :26-27)*. The fact that man is the image of God and can be in relationship with God has as its consequence that the human being is a theological locus. Man is capable of God in his life and in each of his actions. In Aristotelian – Thomist theology, this understanding is known by the phrase: *homo capax Dei*.

This feature is innate in human beings: without God, humans are unsatisfied. Man is restless until he reaches the infinite good. This indigence creates a tension in man’s constitution, which leads him to search, to find and to continue searching for. As Bishop Augustine of Hippo says, “Because you made us for yourself, our heart is restless until it rests in you”¹²⁵(*Quia fecisti nos ad te et inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in*

¹²⁴ Cfr. Eph. 4.24

¹²⁵ Augustin de Hipona, *Confesiones*. Libro I, 1.1 (Barcelona: Ediciones Austral, 2017), 7.

te). All these anthropological considerations suggest that human beings are always searching for liberation, their holistic healing that is linked radically with finding the meaning of life. Human beings cannot make sense of what they do until they realize that only God can give them the most radical meaning of their existence.

Finding the meaning of life for human beings is part of their nature and vocation in this world. This journey leads toward the liberation and healing those human beings long for. The process of salvation in a believer is one that changes the whole person, making the believer a human being as God intended. One important area of healing explained in this section is healing by meaning. Finding meaning will have a follow up in the next chapter when I'll talk about philosophical and psychological approaches of my project.

To conclude this section of theological anthropology in my study, I would like to finish with a quotation from *Gaudium et Spes*: "In fact, the mystery of man is solved in the mystery of the incarnate Word. " (GS 22). In this sense, anthropology is related to Christology and Christology is connected to anthropology and both to ecclesiology; all these treaties are part of my proposal cycle of the *Mysterium Salutis*.

Fourth Section: Ecclesiology and *Mysterium Salutis*

The *ekklesia* or Christian community as the Body of Christ is a central theme in the theology of the New Testament. The apostle Paul in his letters gives clear teachings that explain the reality of being a body with different functions for the common good. The fact that Paul's letters are addressed to specific communities tells us much of the importance and the vision that he intended to communicate to his readers. For Paul, to be

Christian is to have a face and a specific name living in the context of a concrete community.

Because of their internal problems, the community of Corinth gave Paul the raw materials necessary to develop a clear vision of the Christian community as the body of Christ, particularly in chapter twelve of his first letter to the Corinthians. This chapter provides us with this vision of body with different organs that perform different functions for the edification of the whole Christian community.¹²⁶ At the same time, in chapter twelve, the first letter of Corinthians gives us a way to be open to the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit, in order to build the Christian community, a community animated by love.¹²⁷

Paul in other letters, also highlights this reality of being a body; for example, the letter to the Ephesians, especially in the first part of the chapter four, calls to the Ephesians to preserve the bond of peace, by being one body and one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father. In Ephesians Paul also describes the different ministries that must be in an ecclesial community.¹²⁸

As a synthesis of Pauline ecclesiology, the Spanish theologian Eloy Bueno de la Fuente presents Paul's vision in four points that describe the Body of Christ:¹²⁹ 1) As the body of Christ, the Church acquires a *personification* and becomes a *unique body* (Col

¹²⁶ Cfr. 1 Cor. 12, 4-31

¹²⁷ "Pero la edificación de la comunidad es posible solamente si los miembros de la comunidad se aman verdaderamente, si aceptan poner los dones y frutos del Espíritu recibidos para beneficio y utilidad de la misma. La edificación no es un fruto y consecuencia de los carismas en sí, sino de los carismas en cuanto animados por el amor". Alberto, Moreno Casas, *Los carismas al servicio de la unidad y diversidad en la Iglesia. Estudio Exegético Teológico de 1 Cor 12, 4-11* (S.T.L. Thesis, Pontifical Gregorian University, 2004), 77.

¹²⁸ Cfr. Eph 4:1-16

¹²⁹ Eloy Bueno de la Fuente, *Eclesiología*, (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1998), 54- 57.

3.15; Eph 2.16). 2) The body of Christ (Col 1,18.24; Eph 1.23; 5.23s) has an ecumenical dimension not only *universal*, but also *cosmic and dynamic*. 3) The Church is the body of Christ and Christ is head of the Church. This will allow one to speak about the *Christus Totus*. 4) The sovereignty of Christ manifests itself in the Church and in the whole cosmos in a full way. In this sense, the Church is presented as *pleroma* (πλήρωμα) or the fullness of Christ (Col 2.9; Eph 1.23).

After reflecting on the reality of the body of Christ, I will describe the type of fraternal relations which help grow a Christian community as they are described in the letters of Paul. Without the fruits and gifts of the Spirit, Paul maintains that the Christian community will weaken and may even disintegrate. These codes of behavior are usually in the ethical part of his writings. Paul's letters basically consist of three parts.¹³⁰ The first is the dogmatic part, where the mystagogue exposes the mystery of Christ in depth and the believer's identity as united to and in Christ. The second part of his letters normally is dedicated to a moral or ethical section which explains how to behave, and gives all kinds of attitudes and values that must be developed and built up in the Christian community. Finally, these attitudes and values,¹³¹ must be concretized in the fraternal relations which exist within and outside the community of believers.

Finally, Paul finishes his letters with Saludos (greeting). In all his letters without exception we will see Paul sending greetings and commendations to specific people, with

¹³⁰ The letters of the Apostle Paul normally follow the construction in three parts: the exposure of the mystery, the moral part, and finally the greetings and recommendations to specific individuals that can be at the beginning and at the end of the letters. The letters that follow this structure with more clarity are: Romans, Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians. In Ephesians; for example, chapters dedicated to expose the mystery of Christ and his work are chapters 1 to 3. While chapters 4 to 6 describe the ethical section that it must observe the Christian community in the various fields of human endeavor.

¹³¹ Cfr. Eph 5:21 – 6:20; Phil 3:1- 4:7; Col 3: 5-23

specific names that reveal to us the beauty of community life and service to the society in which they are located. This model for the construction of the Pauline letters also offers us a model for pastoral action. Cultivating healthy fraternal relationships between members of a Christian community through the expression of greeting makes the community grow and mature, but this greeting must be exercised within the community sincerely and with love to increase the health of others and not to undermine it.

This sequence is a great model for Christian communities today and all who must gather until the end of time. Many current communities have focused more on morals and have become 'moralist communities' rather than *mystagogical*¹³² communities that spread the *mystery* of God's Love.

A key aspect to consider in my pastoral proposal is the Christological basis for the ministry of healing. My project draws upon the history of Jesus revealed in the gospels and in other passages of scripture in both the Old and New Testaments. This Christological approach maintains reflection centered on the person and works of Jesus Christ, particularly his works of healing, that gives many possibilities for a fruitful ministry. As a result, the proposal promises to be a pastoral action with positive impact on communities of believers due to its direct connection with the person of Jesus. The theme of healing has a profound Christological basis that allows believers to easily relate to the other areas of theology. The theological areas we are using in this project are

¹³² Originating from the Greek language, "mystagogy" means "*learning about the mysteries.*"

Christology, anthropology, ecclesiology, and liturgy, where this project reaches its culmination.¹³³

In conclusion, the dynamic model of *Mysterium Salutis* has helped me to explain and better understand my project. This model is also a *cycle of healing* that unites the different theological areas of Christology, anthropology, ecclesiology and liturgy in harmony. Christology (Christ, as source of salvation or Christ the source of *salud*-health), with theological anthropology (the human being as a *locus* of salvation- *salud*-health) to build an ecclesiology (the body of Christ that moves on through *el saludo*-fraternal relationships) and liturgy as the culmination and updating the Work of Christ in favor of the human beings, especially the believers. Liturgy allows the human being to enter the dialog of love in communion with the Holy Trinity.

¹³³ Millare R. The Hermeneutic of Continuity and Discontinuity between Romano Guardini and the Joseph Ratzinger: The Primacy of Logos. *Nova et vetera*. 2020;18(2):521-563. Accessed November 19, 2021.

Chapter 6

Philosophical and Psychological Approaches

I would accept the will of God, even though, it could be difficult to accept, but I would be open to another type of healing that may be more important to me. --Olivia¹³⁴

After my theological considerations in chapter five, in this chapter I will turn to the theoretical underpinnings of my thesis. I hope to enter into a conversation with two theorists rather than forcing them into an argument supporting the validity of my thesis. Such a dialog is a natural event between two or more entities that respect their views and offers opportunities to understand better the phenomenon in question. This dialog is also called Faith and Reason¹³⁵ in many church's arenas. My topic, a holistic approach to healing, has connections with many different fields. I will enter dialog with only two of them for purposes of this essay. In the following two sections I will explore psychiatry and philosophy using an existentialist approach.

Section one: Viktor Frankl and Logotherapy (Healing by meaning)

In *Man's Search for Meaning*, Viktor Frankl describes from his own experience the events that happened in concentration camps during the Nazi atrocities in Poland and other Eastern European countries during the Second World War. Frankl's narrative is soulful and vivid when he describes those prisoners who had given up on life and lost all hope for a future as inevitably the first to die. They died less from lack of food or

¹³⁴ Focus group

¹³⁵ La fe y la razón (*Fides et ratio*) son como las dos alas con las cuales el espíritu humano se eleva hacia la contemplación de la verdad. Dios ha puesto en el corazón del hombre el deseo de conocer la verdad y, en definitiva, de conocerle a Él para que, conociéndolo y amándolo, pueda alcanzar también la plena verdad sobre sí mismo (Cfr. *Ex* 33, 18; *Sal* 27, 8-9; 63, 2-3; *Jn* 14, 8; 1 *Jn* 3, 2).

medicine than from lack of hope or lack of something to live for. In other words, they died from lack of meaning. By contrast, Frank kept hope, and himself, alive by summoning up thoughts of his family and the prospect of seeing them again and by dreaming of lecturing after the war about the psychological lessons to be learned from the concentration camps.

The will meaning, which we can also call the ability to choose, or freedom, finds meaning in suffering. This will to meaning described by Frankl can occur in the face of an adverse situation, which for him was the enormous suffering in a concentration camp, but which for us could be a physical illness or emotional distress due to a divorce, a bad relationship with a child, the loss of a job or a friendship, or the most difficult thing, the death of a loved one.

In the will to meaning, we find the term *logos*, used by Frankl in a philosophical sense. Logos is related to the meaning of life. This term is better understood as a focus on the future rather than the past as Freud's psychoanalysis had proposed. Freud's proposal works as a defense mechanism to respond to problems which can be called neuroses. Logotherapy through meaning deals with present problems, using the human will and freedom, emphasizing the future. The search for meaning is not an abstract meaning but something very concrete. Such meaning is an ontological need, an existential condition of the human being.

For Frankl, the 20th century is an epoch that denotes an existential void, as it is a time when the scientific, religious, political, and social structures and paradigms that were the foundation of society collapse. Standing before this emptiness, the human being responds in one of two ways. First, the human being might let himself be carried away by

the masses and act like everyone else. "He does what has to be done" in the face of an authoritarian regime. In the second response, the human being follows the meaning of his life, which entails following his vocation, following his own peculiarity, and following his freedom. All the above are characteristic of existential and personal philosophy.

The concrete meaning of a person's life is manifested in several ways. First, an individual acts, and thus realizes his abilities and tastes. Second, through a legacy when an individual through his family influence discovers his abilities and values. Third, via suffering as a door to find the meaning of life, when that suffering that is not masochism and yet is allowed to manifest and not be blocked by the individual. People may want less suffering but focusing on that desire instead of on what is present acts as a hindrance to such meaning. The human being must learn to cope with suffering and keep their human dignity, even in an environment such as a concentration camp. In *Man's Search for Meaning*, Frankl writes:

“Fundamentally, therefore, any man can, even under circumstances, decide what shall become of him -- mentally and spiritually. He may retain his human dignity even in a concentration camp. Dostoevski said once, “There is only one thing that I dread: not to be worthy of my sufferings.” These words frequently came to my mind after I became acquainted with those martyrs whose behavior in camp, whose suffering and death, bore witness to the fact that the last inner freedom cannot be lost. It can be said that they were worthy of their sufferings; the way they bore their suffering was a genuine inner achievement. It is this spiritual freedom -- which cannot be taken away -- that makes life meaningful and purposeful... But not only creativeness and enjoyment are meaningful. If there is a meaning in life at all, then there must be a meaning in suffering. Suffering is an ineradicable part of life, even as fate and death. Without suffering and death human life cannot be complete.”¹³⁶

¹³⁶ Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), 66-67.

The will is a human being's most important trait in extreme conditions. The action of the other prompts a response and such choosing acts as a trigger for the will. In the case of unwanted illness and other innocent suffering¹³⁷, the individual would have to choose to live with the pain that it produces to find meaning and peace or to choose a response in negative way, seeking to avoid pain and lamenting in the face of suffering. For Christians, suffering is endured by finding meaning in uniting one's own sufferings with those of Christ. This approach to suffering does not contradict the attitude of a dynamic faith that calls for a miracle in the face of diseases and illness that afflict human beings, but rather complements it.

I want to reflect on comments in passages in *Man's Search for Meaning* that highlight actions that helped keep Frankl and his companions remain alive and filled with hope. These actions could help my congregations, offering hope not only to them, but also to other Christian communities, in the midst of suffering caused by personal crisis or institutional oppression.

The first excerpt I want to discuss is:

"But one thing I beg of you"; he continued, "shave daily, if at all possible, even if you have to use a piece of glass to do it... even if you have to give your last piece of bread for it. You will look younger, and the scraping will make your cheeks look ruddier. If you want to stay alive, there is only one way: look fit for work. If you even limp because, let us say, you have a small blister on your heel and an SS man spots this, he will wave you aside and the next day you are sure to be gassed... therefore, remember: shave, stand and walk smartly; then you need not be afraid of gas. All of you standing here, even if you have only been here twenty-four hours, you need not fear gas, except perhaps you." And then he pointed to me and said, "I hope you don't mind my telling you

¹³⁷ The reading of The Book of Job by Gustavo Gutierrez in a Latin-American context gives us many insights about the sense of the suffering and pain and how human beings deals to find a language applicable to God in the midst of innocent suffering. Gustavo Gutierrez. *On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent*, (New York: Orbis Books, 1987), 12.

frankly.” To the others he repeated, “Of all of you he is the only one who must fear the next selection. So, don’t worry!” And I smiled. I am now convinced that anyone in my place on that day would have done the same.¹³⁸

From this passage we can learn a basic and essential attitude for facing different crises. Caring for the physical aspect of the individual is very important to survive and maintain a motivation in different commitments, as well as just to feel well. When facing problems, such as sufferings, illness, loss of job, divorce, or the death of a loved one, usually the human being becomes hopeless and may neglect their physical appearance or experience significant weight changes. To smile in times of persecution is not easy but is a medicine for the soul and the physical body. The sense of humor relates to the attitude of smiling and Frankl many times will mention the importance of a sense of humor in his narrative.

Frankl encourages us to have the right attitude toward life. The right attitude is a fundamental in our development as human beings. He argues that the real question in our existence is not what life expects from us, rather what we expected from life. We need to stop asking about the meaning of life, and instead think of ourselves as those who were being questioned by life every day and every hour. In that context our response must consist, not only in talk or meditation, but in right actions.¹³⁹

The meaning of life differs from person to person and from moment to moment. Thus, it is impossible to define the meaning of life in a general way. Questions about the meaning of life can never be answered by sweeping statements. “Life” does not mean something vague, but something very real and concrete, just as life’s tasks are also very

¹³⁸ Viktor E. Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), 19-20.

¹³⁹ *Man’s Search for Meaning*, 77

real and concrete. Frankl narrates two cases of men that face the typical argument of having nothing more to expect from life. Both men had talked of their intentions to commit suicide:

“In both cases it was a question of getting them to realize that life was still expecting something from them; something in the future was expected of them. We found, in fact, that for the one it was his child whom he adored and who was waiting for him in a foreign country. For the other it was a thing, not a person. This man was a scientist and had written a series of books which still needed to be finished. His work could not be done by anyone else, any more than another person could ever take the place of the father in his child’s affections. This uniqueness and singleness which distinguishes each individual and gives a meaning to his existence has a bearing on creative work as much as it does on human love.”¹⁴⁰

There is no life if there is no concrete meaning of life. That meaning is different for every human, and could be a profession, a family, a person, a vocation to serve others, or coping with an illness to serve a family or a community. The different experiences of a person’s destiny are unique to each individual and unrepeatable. No person and no destiny can be compared with any other person or any other destiny. No situation repeats itself and each situation calls for a different response. Sometimes the situation in which a person finds himself may require him to shape his own fate by action. At other times it is more advantageous for him to make use of an opportunity for contemplation and to realize strengths in this way. Sometimes a person may be required to bear his cross. Every situation is distinguished by its uniqueness and there is always only one right answer to the problem posed by the situation at hand.¹⁴¹

As noted above, the text of *Man’s Search of Meaning* includes details from the life of the main character, the psychiatrist and neurologist Viktor Frankl, who is

¹⁴⁰ *Man’s Search for Meaning*, 79

¹⁴¹ *Man’s Search for Meaning*, 77

reflecting on those experiences. One of his key points is the importance of the will, which represents the intention to move forward above all things. This very primordial capacity can be fragile in an extreme situation, however, as for example, in an anecdote about cigarettes.

“The only exceptions to this were those who had lost the will to live and wanted to ‘enjoy’ their last days. Thus, when we saw a comrade smoking his own cigarettes, we knew he had given up faith in his strength to carry on, and, once lost, the will to live seldom returned.”¹⁴²

The previous lines show that the will in a prisoner is as necessary to survive as the need to exchange cigarettes for food. Without a will to meaning, individuals took the opportunity to satisfy their tastes or secondary needs, ignoring the important things in favor of the superfluous. This can also be called procrastination.

At this point, I want to address one critique of Frankl’s understanding. He sometimes sounds hard on people who lose hope. In the concentration camps, he observed that people who had hopes of being reunited with loved ones, or who had projects they felt a need to complete, or who had great faith, tended to have better chances than those who had lost all hope. Here is the point where some critiques arise, because he does not always allow enough of a continuum between having hope or not having hope. In real life, many people in moments of hardship experience something between complete hope and no hope at all. In that space many people are in the process of maturing as human beings, and in that process grow in hope. On one hand, I agree with this critique because growing in hope and, as a consequence finding meaning in life, is an arduous journey for all human beings.

¹⁴² *Man’s Search for Meaning*, 8

On the other hand, existentialism as a philosophical movement is very realistic in itself, and tries to fill the gaps between hope and no hope in real life and its sufferings. Frankl with his approach in psychiatry is one of its noticeable expositors, even if sometimes he can seem like he is ignoring this approach. In other works, such as *The Doctor and the Soul*,¹⁴³ Frankl has a holistic vision of a human being and, in my view, he tries to fill those intermediates gaps. This means that man lives in a tri-dimensional world. This tri-dimensional world includes: 1. a world of physical things, which is the physical-biological (somatic) level; 2. a world of anxieties and hopes, perceptions and memories, of introspection and emotions, which is the mental-intellectual (psychic) level; and 3. a world of searching, discovering and actualizing unique meanings for one's life, which is the socio-spiritual (noetic) level.

Frankl has offered revelations into how human beings are able to overcome situations that would seem unsurvivable, since what begins as trauma can result in people finding meaning in life. In my pastoral ministry, both in Odessa, Texas, and in Tulsa, Oklahoma, I have seen people in need of guidance to help them find meaning in life in times of suffering and illness. In this sense the guides that Frankl offers have been a sure guide for my ministry. The existentialist context of his proposal has been a key since it touches the concrete human being, the real man or woman with whom we can all identify during difficult moments in our Christian journey. In this sense, the teachings and insights of existentialism have much to say not just to my people in Odessa and Tulsa,

¹⁴³ *The Doctor and the Soul* explores topics on searching meaning of life in general as well as the meaning of specific areas of one's life, such as work and personal relationships. This work also explores issues of psychotherapy on its way to rehumanization. Here is where he tries to fill those gaps between hope and no hope, as I mentioned above.

but to all the postmodern generation who often try to escape from suffering and pain as something dangerous, instead of facing it in order to be healed and find meaning in life. The same philosophical context that underlies Frankl's work is also found in my next author, Gabriel Marcel.

Section two: Gabriel Marcel and his Phenomenology and Metaphysics of Hope

Existentialism as a philosophical movement started in continental Europe and was strongest from about 1930 until 1970. Today existentialism has left its mark on most theoretical disciplines.¹⁴⁴ One of my favorite authors is the French philosopher, Gabriel Marcel, a proponent of Christian Existentialism. In his masterwork *Homo Viator*, the author writes that the human being is in a continuous process of either becoming more human or being dehumanized. The person becomes more human as he/she lives through the proper sufferings and limitations of existence, both one's own and in relationship to others in walking with them. The suffering, instead of being a negative experience, most of the time is an opportunity to be better as a human being and as a Christian.

The panorama of war, social destruction, dehumanization, and fraud in Gabriel Marcel's life all added to his family's tragedy. These forces caused him to question, to search for answers, and, eventually, to develop thinking and responses in opposition to

¹⁴⁴ Existentialism deals with concrete human being that suffers, and faces tragic event in society. This philosophical movement was a reaction against *idealism* that promoted abstract categories about human beings and many times is distant from real life. Some important books on idealism are: *Principles of Human Knowledge*, by George Berkeley, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, by G.W.F. Hegel, and *Critique of Pure Reason*, by Immanuel Kant.

his circumstances. His philosophy, or better to say his metaphysics¹⁴⁵, seems to have the aim of going beyond the problems of reason to penetrate the mystery of being and the mystery of religion. Mystery is the broad category of concepts to which Marcel opposes mere problems. Unlike a problem which presents itself as an obstacle in our way, a mystery is something which we encounter, not as something to be understood or solved, but to be experienced and in which we take part.

I see this distinction leading to a dialectical reality that directly illuminates my thesis: mystery and problem, hope and despair, and also illness and healing. I see a great connection between hope, mystery and my topic of healing. When a human being suffers for some reason, he may enter the mystery and seek ways of hope and love¹⁴⁶ to find solutions that sustain him and those around him. If not, the human being only will find easy ways to solve problems by taking an erratic and superficial approach, an approach that leads to despair and solitude.

Marcel does not get used to destruction nor is he indifferent to human suffering. He seeks answers until he manages to trace a hopeful path by opening to the Christian experience. He wrote many articles dedicated to the topic of hope as part of his personal experience of looking for hope amid the situation of destruction and dehumanization in the society. The following excerpts describe what the concept of hope means to Marcel and what concepts are used as synonymous, or those concepts that do not describe the meaning of hope according to Marcel's approach:

¹⁴⁵ Metaphysics or Ontology is one of the treatises of philosophy that deals with the first principles of being, identity and change, space and time, causality, necessity and possibility.

¹⁴⁶ "It is not possible to sit in judgment on the case of hope without at the same time trying the case of love." Gabriel Marcel, *Homo Viator, Introduction to the Metaphysics of Hope*, trans. Emma Craufurd and Paul Seaton (South Bend: St. Augustine Press, 2010), 52.

“It is obvious that in hope there is something which goes infinitely further than acceptance, or one might say more exactly that it is a non-acceptance, but positive and hence distinguishable from revolt¹⁴⁷ ...It goes without saying that this natural optimism is not to be confused any more than theoretical optimism with hope.”¹⁴⁸

“This is what determines the ontological positions of hope -- absolute hope, inseparable from a faith which is likewise absolute, transcending all laying down of conditions, and for this very reason every kind of representation whatever it might be. The only possible source from which this absolute hope springs must once more be stressed. It appears as a response of the creature to the infinite Being to whom it is conscious of owing everything that it has and scandal.”¹⁴⁹

“Perhaps after these considerations we might at last attempt to give the definition which we would not allow ourselves to place at the beginning of our analysis: we might say that hope is essentially the availability of a soil that has entered intimately enough into the experience of communion to accomplish in the teeth of will and knowledge the transcendent act -- the act establishing the vital regeneration of which this experience affords both the pledge and the first-fruit.”¹⁵⁰

After reflecting on the excerpts above, I believe hope is inseparable from faith, which is how Marcel in his phenomenological journey connects with the infinite Being and how from hope comes an adequate and rational response to suffering, illness, and dehumanization. Respect the inseparable union between love and hope, Marcel argues; “It is not possible to sit in judgment on the case of hope without at the same time trying the case of love.”¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁷ Gabriel Marcel, *Homo Viator, Introduction to the Metaphysics of Hope*, trans. Emma Craufurd and Paul Seaton (South Bend: St. Augustine Press, 2010), 32.

¹⁴⁸ *Homo Viator*, 38.

¹⁴⁹ *Homo Viator*, 40-41

¹⁵⁰ *Homo Viator*, 61

¹⁵¹ *Homo Viator*, 52.

Marcel warns however that love for this life is not that which simply seeks for superficial diversions, but rather a love that is metaphysical or ontological, “rooted in being,” and which does not correspond with anything on which a value can be set or with anything negotiable. To recover the love of life, then, is precisely to realize the nature of love itself. One needs to recover a true love for life, rather than a banal ‘taste for life.’ In restoring the love of this life, we are naturally led to reestablish hope in connection with the infinite Being.

When a human being suffering from an external cause is irretrievably launched into the mystery to seek ways of hope and love, it is to find solutions that sustain him and those around him. At this point, I want to say that my project thesis is a small contribution and a response of hope and love through a healing act for many who feel hopeless. The response of hope and love which Marcel advocated in his own times also matters in our contemporary society.

Today, change is seen as synonymous with progress, but progress does not seem to be synonymous with prosperity, a dignified life or social justice. Poverty continues to marginalize many amid the increasingly global world, with millions of people surviving without having space, option or choice. In these years of pandemic era, people are experiencing issues about growing poverty and social inequality,¹⁵² identity crisis,

¹⁵² Pre-existing inequalities in the United States and most countries around the world made ordinary people vulnerable to the dual blows of the current public health and economic crises. Flawed policy responses to the pandemic have contributed to a further widening of long-standing economic, racial, and gender divides. As ordinary people around the world suffer from the health and economic impacts of the pandemic, billionaires have actually seen their fortunes expand. According to Institute for Policy Studies analysis of Forbes data, the combined wealth of all U.S. billionaires increased by \$1.763 trillion (59.8 percent) between March 18, 2020 and August 17, 2021, from approximately \$2.947 trillion to \$4.765 trillion. Of the more than 700 U.S. billionaires, the richest five (Jeff Bezos, Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg, Larry Page, and Elon Musk) saw a 107 percent increase in their combined wealth during this period, from \$349 billion to \$740 billion, Accessed on October 21, 2021, [Inequality and Covid-19 - Inequality.org](https://inequality.org/covid-19/)

uncertainty, fragility in relationships, a loss of liberty through authoritarian mandates, and the impoverishment of the inner life.

In my view, the causes of this increasing marginalization are a paradoxical individualism,¹⁵³ lack of critical thinking and reasoning in which people became part of a herd, abuse of power from the different sources of authority, and irreligion in society which is identified by philosophers and sociologists as postmodern era. But amid this hopeless environment, Gabriel Marcel speaks to us about hope. It is only if we place ourselves with a hopeful gaze in front of our current circumstance that we can do something to rebuild or at least stop the rhythm of destruction towards which the world seems to be heading. It is not enough to reflect or to analyze the thoughts of our contemporary philosophers and influencers. It is not enough to be informed of the current news in the world. We must place ourselves in service to others, especially those who most need it. However, the gaze of the sociologist or philosopher allows us to understand that we perceive reality in a fragmented way.

Marcel's contribution to this time of crisis is to persuade us to have hope in the face of impending despair or emotional illness. It is that hope, says Marcel, that allows us to overcome the desire and inclination to despair, to resist what is presented as reality. Hope also helps us to overcome the anxious paradigm of *Having* by *Being* in our contemporary society. In the next excerpt we can learn the consequences of being

¹⁵³“Basically, we need to realize that postmodernity presents itself as a paradox, and that two kinds of logic coexist intimately within it: one which favors autonomy, and one which increases dependency...People are made more responsible for themselves, on the one hand, but are more freed from rules and regulations, on the other. The essence of individualism is indeed paradox...It is thus essential to realize that every increase in autonomy occurs at the expense of a new dependency, and that postmodern hedonism has two faces.” Gilles Lipovetsky, *Hypermodern Times*, (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2005), 7-8.

tormented by the fear of *Having*, which leads to our ruin as we follow the steps of *Having* instead *Being*.

“The more we allow to ourselves to be the servants of Having, the more we shall let ourselves fall a prey to the gnawing anxiety which Having involves, the more we shall tend to lose not only the aptitude for hope, but even I should say the very belief, indistinct as it may be, of its possible reality. In this sense it is no doubt true that, strictly speaking, only those beings who are entirely free from the shackles of ownership in all its forms are able to know the divine light-heartedness of life in hope. But, as far as we can judge, this liberation, this exemption, must remain the privilege of a very small number of chosen souls.”¹⁵⁴

Lipovetsky, around 70 years later, explains the predominant situation of *Having* in which the society lives. He uses the term age of consumption, or hyper-consumerism in our society.

“We have moved beyond the stage: the time of disenchantment with postmodernity itself has arrived – the time of the demythification of life lived in the present now that it is forced to face the rising tide of insecurity. Instead of being lightened, our burden has become heavier; hedonism is the retreat before our fears, the servitudes of the present seem more significant than the opening up of possibilities entailed by the individualization of society. On the one hand, the society of fashion endlessly incites us to enjoy the increasingly numerous pleasures of consumption, leisure, and well-being. On the other, life is becoming less light-hearted, more stressful, more anxious. The increasing insecurity of people’s lives has supplanted the carefree ‘postmodern’ attitude.”¹⁵⁵

Both Marcel and Lipovetsky warn us about the dangers of the servitude of *Having*, and disenchantment of the age of consumption in which we are living. This age is characterized by material goods and creating a ‘nice’ image through fashion and countless prefabricated needs. In this way, the image that many people are ‘selling’ of

¹⁵⁴ *Homo Viator*, 55

¹⁵⁵ Gilles Lipovetsky, *Hypermodern Times*, (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2005), 40.

themselves by posting ‘only beautiful things about themselves’ on Facebook and social media could be seen as a means of participating in the hyper-consumerist society. Those things lead to selfishness, stress and emptiness of life, which Frankl has called the loss of ‘meaning of life’. All these elements when embodied by human beings could become a different kind of emotional and physical illness.

Hope and love are really the force, the impulse behind any project, plan or campaign that seeks to transform a given situation. The fight against hopelessness in marginalized communities must remain that vital force against the destructive threat of social segregation. It must continue to be the force that mobilizes the *authentic* protest in the streets against *injustice*.¹⁵⁶ Hope and love must continue to drive many to resist the destructive force of evil.

The fight against hopelessness is necessary for those who choose suicide, especially during this COVID pandemic and for those who surrender to situations that they consider irremediable. We too will be dead when we stop trying. But if hopelessness paralyzes, hope liberates. However, one must ask if a simple or elaborate discourse on hope can produce that force or vitality, that conviction that it is worth resisting, retrying, or believing. According to Marcel, this active fight against despair cannot be accomplished by human efforts alone but must also incorporate spiritual practices. Such hope is a breath of the soul. Marcel tells us about an ontological mark of hope, that absolute hope inseparable from an absolute faith.¹⁵⁷ It is necessary to consider that

¹⁵⁶ Here, I am using the adjective *authentic* and the noun *injustice*, because in our contemporary society, we are accustomed to observe many kinds of manipulations, since the mass media serves the interests of the ‘elites’ and ‘powerful’ people, and not the real needs of poor and voiceless people.

¹⁵⁷ *Homo Viator*, 40

Marcel was, in addition to being a philosopher, a religious man who decided to investigate the background of religion, specifically Christianity, and that throughout his experiences he was establishing the conviction of his faith. Marcel developed a philosophy of existence reflecting on religion from experience and tried to radically distinguish knowledge and faith. His was a passage from *I think* to *I believe*. Marcel considered that in Christianity there had to be an extremely deep reality and his duty as a philosopher was to understand that reality.

Perhaps it is not possible to say whether a work of this type can persuade the reader about the need to increase the value of hope, as it was taught in our early catechism lessons. Nor is it possible to increase the value of hope in our lives from a simple speech or good words. According to Marcel, hope is a gift received by God's grace. What we do know is that Marcel did his own synthesis between faith and reason. Marcel's work was done by a man with a spiritual experience that was convinced of his faith. Faith is naive for many, but it is also naive to think that faith is based on simple concepts. It is necessary to understand that faith is conviction, but this conviction is almost always the product of experiences and reflections.

In the same way, I have been persuaded not only by a speech, but by religious experiences that made me restless to reflect my Christian faith, to recognize my itinerant condition as *Homo Viator*. My duty as a believer and thinker has inspired me to investigate the phenomenology and metaphysics of hope linked to faith and love as a key element for my project on a holistic approach to healing.

In conclusion, I can say that searching for the meaning of life is linked with a hope that is fearless, is rooted in love and grows with love, is inseparable from faith, is

open to miracles, is open to receiving healing as a gift that is not merited or in payment for our efforts, and is always ready to risk because it is not anchored in the worldly and material assurances of *having* but because it moves in the *being*, in the mystery of the infinite Being.

Chapter 7

Learnings and Practice of the Act of Ministry

From my experience, the proposal of healing prayer for this congregation is a huge opportunity to build a healthy community and the Eucharist service is the right place to develop this practice. --Jairo¹⁵⁸

Chapter seven will explain the third phase of my overarching methodology for my project. This third phase is To Act. The overarching framework that I am using for this project is the methodology of *See, Evaluate* and *Act*. This methodology has proven very effective in the work of pastoral theology in mainline Latin American churches. My project also uses a phenomenological approach which is appropriate for studying a holistic approach to healing.

The phase of *Act* is always characterized by looking for criteria, actions, and strategies that can help to improve the act of ministry that we have explored in this project. Even if those actions are ‘little,’ pastoral actions improve by ensuring that ‘little theologies’ not only remain in the speculative field but also translate into beneficial actions by concrete people and concrete congregations. I believe that the words of Clemens Sedmak in his work *Doing Local Theology* have much to say in this regard: “The little theologies arise in concrete occasions and in response to specific needs; they are often evoked by simple questions. As personal answers to personal questions and particular reactions to local concerns little theologies are developed face to face with the people without using ‘canned’ answers. Constructing little theologies requires the ability

¹⁵⁸ Focus group

to listen and learn. Articulating them requires both sensitivity to the realities of the concrete situation and basic knowledge of the gospel.”¹⁵⁹

This chapter will describe what has been achieved in this project. New learning arose after analyzing the outcomes collected in Chapter Four through interviews, focal groups, personal interviews, and through the insights of theology,¹⁶⁰ psychiatry, and philosophy. I will explore these in the first section of this chapter. The second section will look specifically at my thesis statement and evaluate it in light of my project. The third section will look at follow-up ministry opportunities based on this project specifically in the city of my new context in Tulsa, Oklahoma. I will also address the possibilities and issues of transferability to other contexts. Finally, I will propose avenues for future research based on my project’s thesis that were not possible to address in the current study.

Section One: Learnings from Act of Ministry of Healing

The data collected in chapter four has pointed to ways in which participants shared their healing experiences, and how those experiences and reflections helped them to broaden and enhance their original views and misconceptions about healing phenomenon.

¹⁵⁹ Clemens Sedmak, *Doing Local Theology. A Guide for Artisans of a New Humanity*. (New York: Orbis Books, 2002), 130.

¹⁶⁰ Biblical theology, especially, studied in relationship with other disciplines, offers a great variety of scholarship, tools and experiences. Those resources provide the opportunity to re-read the history of men and women of faith along with their failures and successes narrated in the Holy Scripture. To be in tune with the sacred texts requires us to avoid falling into fundamentalist interpretations or theological speculations that say nothing to today’s society.

Using the instrument developed by Lynn Underwood (DSES), I explored the responses to sixteen simple questions from my selected participants. Through this survey they became more aware of their experiences and learnings. At this point, I want to say that the learnings were synchronous between the participants and me. One important learning is that most people reported an increase in their relationship with God because of the healing sessions offered through this act of ministry. On Underwood's scale, participants passed from a level two to a level four, moving from "sometimes close" to "always near" to God when participating in the sessions of healing prayer.

Both congregations had the same growth in experiencing greater closeness to God in their lives. Another important outcome is that individuals experienced peace, comfort, and the strength to bear their diseases, and some noticed improvements in their physical condition as a result of healing prayer. In this respect, I note that my analysis and measurements, as in other phenomenological studies, demonstrate that prayer has been reported to improve outcomes in human beings, but it is not always totally clear how this happens. That is work for further research in this field of psychology of religion and spirituality.

After the prayer sessions, surveys, and focal groups, project participants better understood the concept of *holistic healing*, since the majority of them previously had only a partial understanding or had misconceptions about the phenomenon of healing. Many believed that healing was only for physical illness and some saw healing as a 'magic action' or that only 'chosen people' can pray or receive the gift of healing. The participants overcame those distortions and learned that a holistic approach to healing opens new, healthy paradigms.

In terms of theological learnings for me, the most important without a doubt was the amazing discovery of the centrality of my topic in Christian theology, especially demonstrated in the meaning of the name and mission of Jesus. The core emphasis of healing is seen in the key terms of justification, redemption, and salvation which harmonize to better understand the *Mysterium Salutis* (Mystery of Salvation). Another learning is that a valuable way to approach healing is a *cycle of healing* where different branches of theology are involved in harmony: Christology, anthropology, and ecclesiology. Christology, concerning Christ the source of salvation- *salud*, is related to theological anthropology, concerning the human being as a *locus* of salvation- *salud* is called to build an ecclesiology with the body of Christ that moves on through *el saludo*-fraternal relationships.

An insight that guides us to simple actions is to build the Christian community through *el saludo* that starts in the Eucharist, offering and receiving the *sign of peace*. This sign of peace and *salud* must then be extended outside the celebration with the believers to preserve unity and with non-believers as a way to bring the light of Christ to them and their life experiences. In our contemporary society and as a consequence in our Latino congregations, the young people noticeably are not accustomed to greeting other people, especially adults. They are 'living in their own world.' We need to teach our congregations, especially our young people, the importance and practice of *el saludo*. We can say that a community that practices *el saludo* is a healthy community but that kind of *saludo* must be linked to the Christian spirituality practiced in promoting an ecclesiology of peace and unity.

In terms of theoretical insights, including those from Frankl and Marcel, the offerings from Frankl to my project are enormous. Frankl's theory of logotherapy completes a holistic vision of healing by incorporating his insights that the patient is confronted with his current problems and sufferings, and from that situation is reoriented toward the meaning of his life.¹⁶¹ An individual being aware of this meaning could contribute much to his ability to overcome his problems or neurosis. In this sense, the pastoral application that Frankl's proposal has for pastors and lay people who have the responsibility of caring, orienting, and guiding people and families is decisive, since many of today's people are suffering spiritually, morally, emotionally and physically. Those sufferings have been exacerbated by the pandemic. Therefore, helping people find meaning in their lives is of capital importance. The concrete actions that I am proposing to implement in our pastoral practice are praying for healing and helping people to find meaning in their current sufferings. These are complimentary pastoral practices.

Gabriel Marcel's insight about phenomenology and the metaphysics of hope is also important here. Hope to Marcel is not something abstract but is visible through different kinds of actions. Seeing hope as actions in real life taken by individuals in the face of specific sufferings, despair, and dehumanization was another helpful way to understand the act of holistic healing.

Marcel's hope is fearless, is rooted in love, grows with love, and is inseparable from faith. Such hope is open to miracles, to receiving and asking healing in prayer as a gift and is the kind of hope that is always ready to risk because it is not subject to

¹⁶¹ Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), 98.

consumerism and a triviality of having. From those concepts of hope emanate countless actions in favor of individuals that arrive in our parishes and missions to receive a word, a smile, a prayer, or a charitable gift. Our neighborhoods and communities, as well, could receive countless blessings through our ministries even if those ministries are small efforts, but driven by love. In this regard, I want to finish this section with these words of Marcel that he constantly repeats in his masterpiece *Homo Viator*: “The process of hope cannot be opened without beginning at the same time that one of love.”¹⁶²

Section Two: Evaluation of My Thesis Statement

The problems I wish to address in my ministry project are people’s feelings of hopelessness, especially the hopelessness found in poor people experiencing emotional and spiritual suffering, lack of meaning in life, physical illness, and difficulties of being cared for by qualified doctors and appropriate medical facilities. My thesis statement is that a holistic approach to healing, offered through healing prayer in a healing service linked to the Holy Eucharist, will contribute to healing individuals and families, and build vital and evangelizing communities.

In this project, I analyzed the Latino congregations of San Miguel, Odessa, TX, and Espiritu Santo, Tulsa, OK, in their respective contexts. I touched their ‘wounds’ in my pastoral practice. Those ‘wounds’ are identified as a sense of despair, lack of meaning in life, spiritual, emotional, and physical sufferings, and social marginalization. These problems were addressed through the act of ministry of holistic healing prayer in the

¹⁶² *Homo Viator*, 75.

context of the Eucharist. At this point, I can evaluate the outcomes obtained in chapter four of this study and the phenomenological method I have utilized.

The participants in this research and I learned that some experiences in the prayer sessions are linked with the *healing phenomenon*, including: “feel the forgiveness of God;”¹⁶³ “experiencing liberation;”¹⁶⁴ “feel confident to confess and acknowledge our sins;”¹⁶⁵ “my sufferings are cured by the love of God;”¹⁶⁶ “I feel deep peace and joy;”¹⁶⁷ “now, I have a sense of inner strength;”¹⁶⁸ “I felt inner peace and confidence to face that difficulty;”¹⁶⁹ and “availability for giving and receiving love.”¹⁷⁰ Those and other experiences were observed in my research and are welcomed and recognized as outcomes in this project. At this point, describing the above experiences as they were lived, observing that the experiences are free of assumptions and prejudices, and using the theoretical foundations that have allowed the creation of a secure framework to describe those experiences, we have an ability to conclude that a phenomenological approach has been appropriate to this project. Consequently, phenomenological study allows us to look at participants’ experiences in order to provide valuable results and validate my project’s thesis and method.

Section Three: Ministry Opportunities and Challenges

¹⁶³ Pedro Focus group

¹⁶⁴ Gabriela Focus group

¹⁶⁵ Juan Focus group

¹⁶⁶ Celia Focus group

¹⁶⁷ Jose Focus group

¹⁶⁸ Martha Focus group

¹⁶⁹ Rocio Focus group

¹⁷⁰ Ramon Focus group

This section describes the ministry opportunities opened by this project in my current context in Tulsa, Oklahoma. I also will address the potential for and issues of transferability to other contexts.

The SWOT analysis used in the final part of chapter three will be applied to the findings in the second section of chapter four to build strategies and ministry opportunities in my act of ministry that can apply in my current context and other contexts. Some strategies involve identification of internal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats. Once we have identified the main strengths and weaknesses internally, along with the obstacles and threats that come from the external environment as we did in chapter three, we are ready to find strategies and develop opportunities for expanding on my act of ministry.

Following the criteria of a SWOT analysis I propose the following actions. Using strengths to take advantage of opportunities, I would develop a strategy of facilitating a mature healing service rooted in a deep biblical understanding and linked with consistent healing tradition in Christianity. Another proposal is to offer counseling to help people find meaning in their lives. We could serve ill persons and pray for healing not only in a Eucharist context but also in the church facilities or other spaces. Finding new sites opens missionary opportunities.

I also hope to overcome some of the weaknesses and misconceptions regarding healing prayer. In the Bible Belt, even if healing prayer is a welcome practice, there exist signs of fundamentalism in respect to the healing phenomenon. Therefore, I propose to teach about healing in a holistic way during sermons and bible studies. Promoting the ordination to diaconate for qualified leaders is also important to maintaining a continuity

in this ministry, even if I leave the congregation in the future. Taking advantage of strengths to minimize threats, and due to various critical, modern or naturalist approaches, I want to provide detailed information to my bishop and presbyter colleagues in the Tulsa Metro Area to prevent misinformation or misconceptions of my act of ministry. Other actions proposed are a constant evaluation from the bishop's committee involving the ministry practices in the healing project as participants, promoters, and those the ministry is accountable to.

For potential replicability of my project, it is important to be aware that nothing in my project depends on any particular place or context. The essence and centrality of my topic comes from the gospel itself and can be transferable to any place and congregational context. The outcomes obtained in the congregations studied are not an obstacle to the project's replication. On the contrary, they are an incentive for other people and congregations to be interested in a holistic approach to healing. One difference based on context might be a greater or lesser openness to this ministry which would require a sensitive adaptation.

As I have mentioned, the Bible Belt has an openness to the practice of healing ministry as well as challenges due to past fundamentalist experiences that make some ministers and congregations refuse to practice healing prayer. Some pastors go so far as to ridicule the healing phenomenon and 'healers' among their parishioners. Those attitudes are ways to grieve God's Spirit.¹⁷¹ The replicability of this phenomenon requires ministers who are open, who resemble Jesus the Good Shepherd, who feel compassion

¹⁷¹ Cfr. Eph 4:30

for their sick parishioners, and who have a basic instruction in healing ministry. This thesis project could be a means of meeting those needs.

Another possibility for replicating this act of ministry is to start with a process like that outlined in this thesis: conduct surveys and focus groups and practice healing prayer in new contexts. I believe that many people are willing to share their experiences and cooperate with the development of such a project, and not only for academic purposes such as helping a doctoral student as in the present study. People telling their stories of salvation and how, in a holistic way, those stories enlarge their learning regarding the healing phenomenon, empowers people to say, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior (Healer) of the world.”¹⁷²

Section Four: Future Research Opportunities

My thesis project opens opportunities to explore holistic healing in a wide spectrum of future research. Opportunities exist to approach this topic from a social perspective, especially when studying predominantly first-generation Latino communities. That population usually faces more health issues than second or third generation Latinos due to a lack of legal immigration status, unstable labor situations, lack of good insurance, and the corresponding inability to access qualified high-tech hospitals and doctors. Future research in these topics could be necessary and pertinent.

Another area of study based on the outcomes of this project is the relationship between holistic healing prayer in Eucharistic settings in Latino congregations and

¹⁷² Cfr. John 4:42

congregational growth. I noted some of my observations and comments on this topic, but exploring this relationship was beyond the scope of my thesis. Relating healing and growth would be its own specific research project due to its complexity and requirements. Such a study would need a longer time to measure the growth, to examine healing prayer practices in different congregations, and probably would require a research team to conduct such a study.

Another topic to research could be the *Mysterium Salutis Cycle* focusing on *el saludo* to determine its importance and how healing correlates to building healthy relationships both within and outside the congregation. One interesting aspect of this research could be *el saludo* in youth and between youth and adults. In my view, we need to teach new generations to offer *el saludo* as a way of protecting them from the isolation and deception of the virtual world. Another engaging research project could be practicing healing prayer and surveying Anglo and Latino congregations to observe differences and similarities. Another important research project would be the relationship between healing prayer and the Eucharist as part of the liturgy.

Chapter 8

Conclusions

The experiences into the prayer sessions help me to better understand the amplitude of healing and how my despair and sufferings could be cured by the love of God. –Silvia¹⁷³

By His wounds we are healed. These beautiful words are taken from the third song of the servant, and they were written by Second Isaiah around 2,650 years ago. They concern a man in deep suffering, not because of bad fortune or who was afflicted by serious diseases in his life, but a man who has been unjustly condemned and who has been crushed for our transgressions to bring us peace and *salud*. The concluding chapter of my thesis aims to collect the main themes discussed, but not to close the reflection and search. Rather, I hope to inspire personal and community reflections and deliberation in the Latino congregations and hopefully in Anglo congregations on the phenomenon of healing in connection with a holistic pastoral practice in the churches today.

Like Isaiah, we, too, as pastors, writers, researchers, and readers have been called *to prophesy* that man, under the guise of a suffering servant and with a crown of thorns, hides the Lord and Savior of humanity who comes to reveal to us the Mystery of Salvation. But how are we going to show that Savior in this postmodern and post-Christian era? If most of the churches and their leadership, especially the mainline churches, have become entangled and distracted with many peripheral issues and relegated to second place the most important task of the church, that is a deep

¹⁷³ Focus group

commentary on *contemplating the one they have pierced*¹⁷⁴ as the Evangelist John reminds us. It is time to wake up and return to the essentials of the gospel, but not in simplistic and fundamentalist ways, nor in an ‘academic scientism’ that explains everything only through materialistic and quantitative categories. In my view, a safe way is through a deep prayer life of individuals and Christian communities along with the use of methodologies appropriate to the qualitative and phenomenological nature of Christian issues. Part of this Christian methodology involves approaching the Holy Bible with a spirit of fidelity to *hermeneutics of continuity*¹⁷⁵ in the work of research and pastoral practice. My project has been a very small attempt at this type of research and pastoral practice around the topic of healing prayer in holistic, Eucharistic, and Latin American contexts. In conclusion, I will review four areas already mentioned above: Latin America as the main context, the outcomes in this project related to methodology, a holistic approach related to the work of synthesis and wholeness, and a Eucharistic approach related to *Mysterium Salutis*.

Latin America since its very beginnings has been a mosaic of cultures united by religion and language. The predominant religion has been Roman Catholicism and Spanish the predominant language. The area has offered very good examples of the

¹⁷⁴ Cfr. John 19:37

¹⁷⁵ One of the most prominent figures of the hermeneutic of continuity is Joseph Ratzinger as I mentioned in my chapter of theology. The next excerpt describes this approach and how the loss of truth comes when modern thinking is the protagonist in the renewal initiatives; “For Benedict, one of the keys to doing this successfully is to emphasize that authentic renewal cannot be the product of a “hermeneutic of rupture”. Any new development in Catholic teaching, Catholic discipline and Catholic worship must be understood as a development which corroborates and confirms what has come before, even as it proposes a new and deeper insight, a more precise formulation, or an important emphasis that has either been overlooked or has special relevance to our current situation”. Jeff Mirus, *Benedict's Hermeneutic of Continuity*. Accessed in January 9, 2022. <https://www.catholicculture.org/commentary/benedicts-hermeneutic-continuity/>

gospel's inculturation overcoming syncretism, but unfortunately there are also examples of impositions, exploitation, fundamentalisms and mixed religion. The *mestizo* culture has a richness and many possibilities to share with the larger society and church. As Elizondo stated, *mestizo* culture is not just an aid to the proclamation of the gospel, but the medium through which God chooses to reveal himself.

In this project, I share as overarching methodology: *Ver, Juzgar, y Actuar* (To See, To Evaluate¹⁷⁶, and To Act). This methodology has proven useful in pastoral theology in many main line churches in Latin America. Until the present, a controversy continues to exist between the theologies from 'above' and from 'below' that have coexisted in Latin America, sometimes in reciprocity, and sometimes in opposition. Those theologies are mainly represented by two groups. One group promotes a radicalization of some biblical narratives, using so-called historical-critical methods and some radical streams of the theology of liberation, and has "demythologized" the thaumaturgical works of Jesus. The other group also uses the biblical narratives, but in a fundamentalistic and charismatic approach with a scarcity of methodologies and hermeneutics. This essay has been a very small effort to reconcile those approaches, looking for reciprocity and complementary.

The presence of new Latino communities in the United States are a hope for all the churches due to their more rapid growth than other groups. The churches that have benefited the most are mainline churches. For the Episcopal church this phenomenon has been an opportunity for growth. At this point, I want to share my experience at Virginia

¹⁷⁶ The literal translation of *Juzgar* is To Judge, but in English sounds improper, so I choose Evaluate as an alternative word and more appropriate to the required meaning and function in the methodology.

Theological Seminary of being the only Latino in my cohort in the doctoral program track. That means I have faced challenges because of the language and culture but also have had the opportunity to open avenues for other Latino students. In my view, one of the most noticeable weaknesses from the Latino culture is that we produce few students at higher education levels. This demonstrates that either we need to provide the basic things for families in material matters or we have a lack of interest in academic discipline, or we have too much interest in spending resources for *la fiesta*. This observation is a challenge for the current and future Latino generations especially here in United States.

Another important topic to review is the connection between my methodology and the outcomes in my act of ministry. The problems faced in this act of ministry are the different kind of sufferings in the Latino communities studied. The proposal to alleviate those situations was written in the thesis statement; facilitating healing prayers using holistic and eucharistic approaches to contribute to the healing of individuals, families, and communities. This essay has explored holistic healing prayer in sessions with two groups of participants. I surveyed and conducted a focus group with each congregation studied. There was a total of sixty participants surveyed and twenty-four participants in the focus groups which explored the experience of healing prayer in their lives within six months of the act of ministry. Survey questions were taken from a research instrument of sixteen questions and used with the permission of its author, Lynn Underwood, DSES. Participants' survey responses evaluated their spiritual experiences connected with the healing prayer. The responses in focus groups expanded the survey responses in lively and touching ways. At this point, I want to emphasize that the term phenomenon is the

same as experience, as Heidegger and Husserl stated and Swinton and Mowat also later pointed out. Experiences are valuable resources in research. Thus, the method used in this project was phenomenology, which is the most appropriate method for this kind of research.

Chapter seven reviewed my project outcomes with an eye toward evaluation and learnings, but now, in this conclusive chapter, we can look again at them as concrete and lively experiences that help us to assess this study. We can also say that we largely succeeded in the objectives of this study. Participants came to understand a holistic vision of healing, to see the benefits and validity of healing prayer, and to find common language to discuss how the fruits of joy, peace, and inner strength that were experienced could be shared in the future. We also recognized how this act of ministry could be continued in a way that fostered maturity in individuals, families, and vital and evangelizing communities.

Another theme to review in this conclusion is the term *holistic*, which is one of the main words used in this work. This word is key to a better understanding of this project and has offered a way to evaluate it. The holistic approach has come to be well understood by the participants in the project. They have managed to understand that healing is not only at the physical level in a reductionist way, but also to understand its power in other areas such as emotions, the mind, and the spirit. In this project, the term holistic is linked also to the work of synthesis and complementarity especially when we talked about theologies from ‘above’ and from ‘below’ that could coexist in reciprocity, and not necessarily in opposition.

In this context of a holistic vision, I would like to comment about how the Bible and consequently theology, together with philosophy,¹⁷⁷ are the greater disciplines to promote a *holistic* and *teleological*¹⁷⁸ vision of humanity, history, society, and the human being itself through a hermeneutic of continuity. Those approaches, responding to what is the ultimate goal of the human being and the world and of how the human being and society exist as complex realities, require a variety of disciplines, including theology and philosophy, to better understand the mystery of the human being as *Imago Dei*. The concepts of *holistic* and *telos* helped to enrich the understanding of my healing project since healing was not reduced to something physical. Nor has healing been presented as a goal, but as a means to seek God, the Giver of the gifts, or, to use Marcel's words, the infinite Being. In this way *telos* and Frankl's proposal of finding meaning are both aligned to healing.

In my project, the research efforts made to explore the phenomenon of healing across various disciplines have been satisfactory; theology with its different disciplines of Christology, ecclesiology, anthropology, and liturgy.¹⁷⁹ The philosophy of Marcel and the psychiatry proposed by Frankl have been a sample of interdisciplinary efforts to support

¹⁷⁷ Some examples of philosophy in history are in the works of Hegel, the great German philosopher. In his book *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, he exposes to us the different stages of human history in philosophical terms, obviously from his political and social perspective. Another example is given by Augustine, the acclaimed bishop of Hippo in North Africa. He offers us a theology of history in his book *The City of God*. He explains how God manifests himself through history and how the Roman Empire did not fall because of idolatry by Christians, but rather, because of the immoral way in which people lived in the Roman Empire. Other books in this perspective are in the Bible, such as Daniel and the Apocalypse, which are works of theology of history and give a holistic and teleologic vision that includes a historical, political, moral, and spiritual vision. This understanding of history draws from categories that are more appropriate to the nature of man created in the image of God.

¹⁷⁸ Teleology comes from *telos* concept, which we talked about briefly in our chapter of theology, denotes a goal, or the end. It refers to the final cause.

¹⁷⁹ Liturgy was barely mentioned in my project and not developed in deep way, due to limited scope of this treatise and because that will be another avenue for research.

my holistic approach. As Lipovestky and Bauman warned us, the atomizing epoch in which we live today does not allow us to achieve mature synthesis. Today we live in the time of ‘experts’ for every miniscule thing, but we forget to cultivate an overall vision that responds better to the nature and complexity of our society and the human being himself.

Another central theme in this study is the Eucharist linked to *Mysterium Salutis*. The terms justification, redemption, and salvation together explain this mystery of salvation that is central in Christianity. The linguistic meaning of *Mysterium Salutis* is better understood in my study utilizing Latin and in Spanish, where *salutis* and *salud* are synonyms. The relation between salvation and *salud* (health) is a key idea in this thesis. Healing connected with the meaning of Jesus (Yahweh saves) as Savior and Lord opens the doors to the proclamation of the apostolic kerygma. A pastoral resource often forgotten is the proclamation of the kerygma. Preaching the kerygma in today’s congregations brings us opportunities for healing as a part of our pastoral practices to build vital and evangelizing communities.

Liturgy is the culmination of all theological reflections, pastoral actions, and all kinds of human activities. This platform gives my act of ministry the potential of being a promising pastoral practice due to the connections between the essentials of the gospel, Christian tradition, and liturgy. The Eucharist is the heart of liturgy, and every Eucharist is curative. The Eucharist’s different moments also help us to find *salud*. Yet healing is not a goal itself but a means to glorify God in Jesus Christ. In that way this project is aligning with God’s project, expressed in Paul’s theology as masterfully presented in Ephesians 1:3-14, and expressed especially in the following passage:

“In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the **Plan** of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be *for the praise of his glory*.

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—*to the praise of his glory*.”¹⁸⁰

This project of healing prayer is love (*agape*) in action, but a love that makes hope and faith grow at the same time as in a virtuous circle. These three theological virtues unite us to God in a new intimacy that compels us into service of our neighbors more with greater maturity. In this sense, I would like to share the provocative words of Gabriel Marcel, our friend and philosopher, to encourage my readers and myself to continue the beautiful vocation of love in our pastoral ministries:

“The only dead are those whom we no longer love.” So long as we love, there is hope which says “you, you in particular, will never die.”¹⁸¹

Finally, this project has been important personally, for my own history of salvation, my own journey in academia, my pastoral practice, and my intimacy with Jesus the author of the *Mysterium Salutis*. I want to thank God for his goodness and mercy in my entire life. Since my early years, I felt his love call me to prophesy his words. The healing process has been a reality in my own path, despite my lack of cooperation at some times in my life. Now with a deeper foundation and renewed awareness of his

¹⁸⁰ Cfr. Eph 1:11-14

¹⁸¹ Marcel, *Homo Viator*, 140.

Sacrifice of Love, and guided by the Holy Spirit, I want to lift the cup of *la salud* in the Eucharist singing with the psalmist:

“What shall I return to the LORD for all his goodness to me?

I will lift up the *cup of salvation* and call on the name of the LORD.”¹⁸²

¹⁸² Cfr. Psalm 116, 12-13(NIV)

Appendix 1

Documento de Información de consentimiento Consentimiento para participar en el proyecto

Título del proyecto: Oración de sanación: Una aproximación holística, eucarística y Latino americana.

Investigador: Alberto Moreno Casas
918.927.2571 (cell)
albertomorenmx@hotmail.com

Invitación: Usted está cordialmente invitado a participar en un proyecto de investigación como parte de la tesis de Doctorado en Ministerio del padre Alberto Moreno.

Compromisos:

1. Una encuesta que consta de dieciséis preguntas sencillas que invitan a ser más conscientes de experiencias como la paz profunda, la alegría, la sensación de fortaleza interior y el dar y recibir amor (sanación). El nombre de la encuesta es Conexión Espiritual en la Vida Diaria y se usarán esas preguntas para tratar de medir el “proceso de sanación” en los individuos y congregaciones. La encuesta se tomará antes y después de las sesiones. (10 minutos cada encuesta)
2. Participación en tres sesiones de oración de sanación durante los servicios dominicales de la Eucaristía. (60 minutos cada servicio)
3. Un grupo de enfoque con otros 10-12 participantes, facilitado por el padre Moreno, donde se abordarán preguntas sobre experiencias personales de sanación durante las sesiones. (90 minutos).

Otros compromisos: Las experiencias serán mantenidas en estricta confidencialidad por parte del investigador y los participantes. Los participantes también pueden decidir abandonar el estudio en cualquier momento. En el documento final, nadie será identificado por su nombre real. No recibirá ninguna compensación económica por participar en este proyecto. Su participación en este estudio tal vez podría implicar un riesgo, incomodidad, ansiedad o estrés mínimos por compartir asuntos personales. Los beneficios pueden ser el crecimiento en tu formación espiritual y humana como discípulo de Cristo en contexto comunitario.

Preguntas/persona de contacto: Si tiene alguna pregunta sobre la investigación ahora o en el futuro, debe comunicarse con el p. Moreno por teléfono al 918.927.2571 o por correo electrónico a: albertomorenmx@hotmail.com

Declaración de consentimiento:

“He leído la descripción anterior de esta investigación y la entiendo. he estado informado de los riesgos y beneficios involucrados, y todas mis preguntas han sido respondidas a mi satisfacción, Además, se me ha asegurado que cualquier pregunta futura que pueda tener

también será contestada por el investigador principal del estudio de investigación.
Acepto voluntariamente participar en este estudio.

- ☐ Doy mi consentimiento para ser grabado en audio y video.
☐ No doy mi consentimiento para ser grabado en audio y video.

Al firmar este formulario, no he renunciado a ninguno de mis derechos legales a los que de otro modo tendría derecho
Se me dará una copia de esta declaración”.

_____ _____ Nombre del participante	_____ _____ Firma del participante	_____ _____ Fecha de la firma
_____ _____ Nombre del Investigador	_____ _____ Firma del investigador	_____ _____ Fecha de la firma

Appendix 1B

Informed Consent Document

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROJECT

Project Title: Healing prayer: A Holistic, Eucharistic and Latin American Approaches.

Investigator: The Reverend Alberto Moreno Casas

918.927.2571 (cell)

albertomorenomx@hotmail.com

Invitation: You are cordially invited to participate in a research project as part of the Reverend Alberto Moreno's Doctor of Ministry Thesis.

Commitments:

1. A survey that consist in sixteen simple questions that invite you to become more aware of experiences such as deep peace, joy, sense of inner strength, and giving and receiving love (healing). The name of the survey is Spiritual Connection in Daily Life and will be use those questions to try to measure the "healing process" in the individuals and congregations. The survey will be taken before and after the sessions. (10 minutes each survey)
2. Participation in three sessions of healing prayer during Sunday Eucharist services. (60 minutes each service)
3. A focus group with the other 10-12 participants, facilitated by Fr. Moreno, where will be addressed questions about personal healing experiences during the sessions. (90 minutes).

Other commitments: The experiences will be kept in strict confidentiality by the investigator and the participants. Participants may also decide to leave the study at any time. On the final paper, no one will be identified by their actual name. No financial compensation will be given to me by participating in this project. Your participation in this study may involve minimal risk, discomfort, anxiety, or stress from sharing personal matters. The benefits could be growing in your spiritual and human formation as disciple of Christ in community context.

Contact Questions/Persons: If you have any questions about the research now or in the future, you should contact Fr. Moreno by telephone at 918.927.2571 or by email at albertomorenomx@hotmail.com

Statement of Consent:

"I have read the above description of this research and I understand it. I have been

informed of the risks and benefits involved, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. Furthermore, I have been assured that any future questions that I may have will also be answered by the principal investigator of the research study. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

☐ I give consent to be audio and video recorded.

☐ I **do not** give consent to be audio and video recorded.

By signing this form, I have not waived any of my legal rights to which I would otherwise

be entitled.

I will be given a copy of this statement.”

_____	_____	

Printed Name of Subject	Signature of Subject	Date Signed

<u>Alberto Moreno</u>	_____	_____
Printed Name of Investigator	Signature of Investigator	Date Signed

Appendix 2

INSTRUCCIONES: Las siguientes preguntas incluyen puntos o asuntos que usted puede o no tener experiencia con ellos. Por favor considere si y cuán a menudo tiene estas experiencias, y trate de pasar por alto si usted siente que debería o no debería tener estas experiencias. Algunas declaraciones utilizan el término Dios. Si esta no es una palabra con la que usted se siente cómodo(a), por favor sustitúyala con cualquier otra idea que traiga a su mente lo que es divino o santo para usted.

	Muchas veces al día	Todos los días	La mayoría de los días	Algunos días	De vez en cuando	Nunca
1. Siento la presencia de Dios.						
2. Siento una conexión con todo lo que es vida.						
3. Mientras estoy orando, o en otros momentos cuando me conecto con Dios, siento una felicidad o júbilo que me levanta de mis preocupaciones diarias.						
4. Encuentro consuelo en mi religión o espiritualidad.						
5. Encuentro mi fortaleza en mi religión o creencias espirituales.						
6. Siento gran paz interior o armonía.						
7. Le pido ayuda a Dios en medio de mis actividades diarias.						
8. Me siento guiado por Dios en medio de mis actividades diarias.						
9. Siento el amor que Dios me tiene, directamente.						
10. Siento el amor que Dios tiene por mí a través de otros.						
11. La belleza de la creación me mueve espiritualmente.						
12. Me siento agradecido por mis bendiciones.						
13. Siento cariño desinteresado por otros.						
14. Acepto a otros aún cuando hacen cosas que pienso que están mal.						
15. Deseo estar más cercano a Dios o en unión con Dios.						
16. ¿En general, cuán cercano te sientes a Dios? 1) Para nada cercano 2) Algo cercano 3) Muy cercano 4) Tan cercano como es posible						

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Appendix 2 B

The list that follows includes items you may or may not experience. Please consider how often you directly have this experience, and try to disregard whether you feel you should or should not have these experiences. A number of items use the word 'God.' If this word is not a comfortable one for you, please substitute another word that calls to mind the divine or holy for you.

	Many times a day	Every day	Most days	Some days	Once in a while	Never
I feel God's presence.						
I experience a connection to all of life.						
During worship, or at other times when connecting with God, I feel joy which lifts me out of my daily concerns.						
I find strength in my religion or spirituality.						
I find comfort in my religion or spirituality.						
I feel deep inner peace or harmony.						
I ask for God's help in the midst of daily activities.						
I feel guided by God in the midst of daily activities.						
I feel God's love for me, directly.						
I feel God's love for me, through others.						
I am spiritually touched by the beauty of creation.						
I feel thankful for my blessings.						
I feel a selfless caring for others.						
I accept others even when they do things, I think are wrong.						
I desire to be closer to God or in union with the divine.						

	Not at all	Somewhat close	Very close	As close as possible
In general, how close do you feel to God?				

The Daily Spiritual Experience Scale © Lynn G. Underwood www.dsescscale.org Do not copy without permission of the author.

Underwood, LG. 2006. Ordinary Spiritual Experience: Qualitative Research, Interpretive Guidelines, and Population Distribution for the Daily Spiritual Experience Scale. *Archive for the Psychology of Religion/ Archiv für Religionspsychologie*, 28:1 181-218.

APPENDIX 3

PREGUNTAS PARA GRUPO DE ENFOQUE DESPUÉS DE LAS SESIONES DE ORACIÓN DE SANACIÓN

1.- ¿Cuál era tu primera noción sobre el tema de sanación?

2.- ¿Que imagen expresa mejor tu experiencia durante las sesiones de la oración de sanación? ¿por qué?

(Hijo prodigo/ Rembrandt, Buen samaritano/ Van gogh, Girasoles/Van gogh)

3.- ¿Crees que la oración de sanación dentro de la eucaristía tenga algún beneficio para ti y tu congregación? ¿Qué tipo de beneficios?

4.- ¿Como reaccionarias desde la fe, en el caso de no recibir alguna sanación esperada y ansiada?

APPENDIX 3B

QUESTIONS FOR FOCUS GROUP AFTER HEALING PRAYER SESSIONS.

- 1.- What was your first notion about the topic of healing?
- 2.- What image reflects better your experience during the healing prayer sessions? Why?
(Prodigal Son/ Rembrandt, Good Samaritan/ Van Gogh, Sunflowers/ Van Gogh)
- 3.- Do you think the healing prayer within the Eucharist has any benefit for you and your congregation? What kind of benefits?
- 4.- How you react from faith, in the case of not receiving some expected and longed for healing?

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