Dear People Whom God Loves,

**HEALING COMMUNITY**

**LEGAL COMMUNITY**

I suggest that much of our conflict among members of our church comes from seeing church as a healing community or as a legal community. I also suggest that we should not eliminate either perspective. It is crucial I believe that we keep a proper balance between the two. It is my opinion that the proper perspective is to see church as a healing community first and that the legal is to serve the healing.

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To understand this, let us look at two ways of understanding good and law. One is to see that something is good because it is commanded. The other is to say that something is commanded because it is good.

I see that the second perspective is a better way to see reality. I say that because I see it conforming to my understanding of Ultimate Reality. GOD is the name we give to Ultimate Reality.

I see the first perspective as emphasizing that God is Powerful. The second emphasizes that God is Love.

The first emphasizes that God is a force that pressures us from the outside by using such things as punishment, fear and guilt. This may bring some conformity but I see it as not very effective at transforming us inside.

The second emphasizes that God is the goodness and love that attracts us and draws us to goodness and love by transforming us inside.

I think that Pope Francis was pointing to the second perspective when he called church a hospital for sinners. Spirit and growth and healing is that inside healing that transforms us into ever deepening compassion, mercy, understanding and forgiveness that extends to more and more people.

Do I believe that God is all powerful? Yes. But we misunderstand. God (LOVE) is the power of love and not the power of force.

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I see force as apparently being effective in the short run but damaging in the long run. I see love as more messy in a way in the short run but bringing us to goodness in the long run.

I see this expressed by the prophet Isaiah. “Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one with whom I am pleased, upon whom I have put my spirit; he shall bring forth justice to the nation, not crying out, not shouting not making his voice heard in the street. A bruised reed he shall not break, and a smoldering wrench he shall not quench, until he establishes justice on the earth.” (Isaiah 42, 1-4a)

I also see this in Jesus’ life. He embraced various kinds of people that were rejected by the leaders of his religious society. His embrace healed them and transformed them inside.

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To return to Healing Community/Legal Community.

* I think that in a healing community laws and obedience will be valuable but will not be primary.
* I think that in a legal community law and obedience will be primary.
* In a healing community law and goodness will not always be seen as the same.
* In a legal community law and goodness will tend to be seen as identical.
* In a healing community it will always be somewhat messy. Various perspectives will likely be seen as good.
* In a legal community one perspective will tend to banish other perspectives.
* In a healing community there will be less inclination to believe that we have the whole truth.
* In a legal community there will be more inclination to believe that we have the whole truth.

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I think that because church is a religious community we must draw good from both the perspectives. Because we are a hospital for sinners, healing must be our primary goal. We must acknowledge that human frailness is in all of us no matter what our role in the church might be. We must look at ourselves and others with compassion and be willing to let GOD (LOVE) slowly and painfully heal us.

We must begin to see more clearly that the presence of GOD (LOVE) is within us. We must see that and not be blinded by the bad actions that hide that presence.

Church structure is necessary. Without it there would be chaos. At the same time we must remember the structure is the servant of the mission. It is valuable only in so far as it helps to spread the Good News. The Good News that we are held and cherished by Infinite Love. That Infinite Love will not rest until we are all healed. It is my personal belief that that Infinite Love can overcome the damage that we humans can do. That healing is a slow and difficult journey. It is also real.

I believe with St. Julian of Norwich that “All things will be well. All manner of things will be well.”

 Smile, God Loves You

 Father Clay