My Dear People:

A few weeks ago, our secretary, John Careiro, answered our parish phone in time to hear a female voice inquire, 'Is Father Edgar Wells still the rector of St. Mary's?' 'Yes,' John replied, 'he is.' 'Thank you very much,' the caller responded, and immediately hung up the receiver. The cause of it all still remains a mystery, leaving us to wonder whether the inquirer was simply interested in acquiring information as an outsider, or whether instead she was a disaffected former parishioner anxious to come home - provided there was a new incumbent as rector of the parish! Simply to serve on the staff of this parish is to be confronted on an almost daily basis by the vagaries of people's behavior, and to marvel anew at the wonder of human nature. St. Mary's is hardly ever boring. It gives us our share of disappointment and sorrow, but above everything else it provides the joy of loving and worshiping God, and of discovering him afresh in the lives of the wonderful people whom we serve.

And it is the excitement of our life here, measured always by the steady continuity of our life of prayer, that makes the priestly ministry of this parish so fulfilling. Possibly the first lesson to be learned by a newcomer at St. Mary's is that of a continuing and persistent life of prayer. In every day's activity in this place we go to God in the mystery of the Eucharist, and it is from that mystery that we go from God to love and minister to the people whom we serve.

And of course it is within the context of worship and service to others that the ministry of this parish is given flesh.
and blood - indeed we might say that it is through this means that the Word is made flesh at St. Mary's, and the Son of God comes truly to dwell among those who seek him here. One of the great joys of our ministry during the past several years has been the opportunity through our Mission House to reach out to some of the homeless people of Manhattan's West Side. Our shelter for homeless women and children continues in operation day by day, and its work is enhanced by a daytime counseling and feeding program operated under the auspices of a secular organization in the city called Women In Need. I am delighted to be able to tell you in this letter that our participation in the Mission House's ministry is presently being given new life by our new Resident Coordinator there, Barry E.B. Swain who now resides in the Mission House where he heads the remarkable ministry begun two years ago by Fr. Clark Berge. As with Father Berge so with Barry: the financial resources of our parish are simply inadequate to support a young man in this work. It is our good fortune, however, to have kept the larger part of a grant of $15,000 received from Trinity parish, Wall Street, a year ago for the maintaining of this ministry. That money is now being made available to Barry in his work in our Mission House. Unlike Father Berge, Barry is limited neither by a year-long period in the diaconate nor by permission from his bishop to spend only a year in residence at St. Mary's. Our hope is that we may see him made deacon and priested during his first year here, and that he will want to remain for a longer period than the year which our present financial resources are able to guarantee. But most of that will be up to him. Our own people have come to know Barry Swain well as a seminarian during the past two years. I know that he will have your support, and certainly the support of your clergy, as he tries to strengthen and ensure an already viable work of Christian love and compassion. Much of that work involves the participation and concern of our own parish family, and I am confident that this will continue.

Let me just for a minute describe something of what our life will be like here during the next two months. We have become accustomed in recent years to the presence of several guests in our rectory during the summer months, some of whom are priest friends of your clergy, and some of whom come here to sample the quality of our life, and to be encouraged by our witness in our own vocations. Often they are seminarians. And often, too, they contribute by their openness and freshness of style to our own ministry here. We are of course delighted that Arthur Wolsoncroft, our parish's own seminarian, is home for his last full summer before ordination. The only regret I've ever had about Arthur's going off to Nashotah has been the loss of his physical presence in this parish during that time. A year from now he will be ordained, Deo volente, and you can be sure that he will carry into his ministry something of the principles and values that underlie our ministry here. From Nashotah also, and living in our rectory this summer, is Mr. Jay Johnson, a Candidate for Holy Order from the Diocese of Chicago who will be a Middler at Nashotah this fall. Jay is in New York to do his Clinical Pastoral Education at Roosevelt Hospital, just a fifteen minute walk from our rectory, and in the free time remaining to him he is taking part as he is able in the daily routine of our parish worship. You will undoubtedly meet him, and I know that you will enjoy him.

As to our clerical guests, I hope of course that Father Jude Bell will be here again for part of his rest from St. Gregory's Abbey in Three Rivers, Michigan. Father Jude and I were once classmates at Nashotah, and he brings with him the quiet stability of the Benedictine life whenever he is at St. Mary's. Another visitor will be Father John Gaskell, our parish missioner of two years ago, and even as I mention his coming I must tell you that he intends to be here on holiday, and I have promised that we will not intrude on his time as he comes to us from his wonderful parish of St. Alban's in Holborn.

All of which reminds me that we are to have another parish mission this fall, and once again it will involve the three days
surrounding our parish Feast of Dedication, this year falling on the 3rd, 4th, and 5th of October. Mark the dates on your calendar now. We published a photo of our Missioner in our May-June issue of AVE, and we publish it again in this issue, and you will see immediately that he is the Bishop of Fond du Lac, The Right Reverend William Stevens. Bishop Stevens preached for us during the Oxford Movement celebration of 1983, and he returns to us this fall to recall us to our Christian vocation, to give us a vision of this parish and its future, and to remind us of our central role in the work of Catholic Renewal within the life of the Episcopal Church. I am looking forward to his arrival with tremendous enthusiasm, and I know that you are too.

Let me end by reminding you of our great summer feast, and an occasion to which many church people look forward each year in the New York area. I refer of course to the Feast of Our Lady’s Assumption, scheduled this year for Friday, August 15th. Of course everything pales after the extraordinary manner in which we observed the feast last year, and the unforgettable memory of the observance of my first twenty-five years in the priesthood at that time. Perhaps unforgettable as well was the weather which, despite my assurances to the contrary, was the most uncomfortable of the entire summer. I am therefore making no predictions about August’s weather this year. Hot or cool, pleasant or uncomfortable, August 15th will belong to Our Lady, and we will keep it as her day in this place. One thing I can promise you: we will have another guest here at that time. It will be Father Clark Berge, and he is coming home to us for that day.

With this letter go my love and prayers, and my confidence that each of you is upholding our ministry on 46th Street. God bless you.

Faithfully yours,

Eugene F. Wells
This past Eastertide provided us with several guest preachers at St. Mary's. One such guest was Fr. William A. Doubleday, formerly Pastoral Care Coordinator for Patients with AIDS at St. Luke's Hospital, and newly appointed Director of Field Education at the General Theological Seminary. Father Doubleday preached to us on the Sixth Sunday of Easter. What follows is the greater part of what he had to say.

Our lesson this morning from the Book of Acts (Acts 14:8-12) reminds us that healing constituted a very significant part of the ministry and witness of the early Christian Church. The lesson echoes what must be crystal clear from any reading of the New Testament: healings of body, mind, and spirit were regular and ongoing events in the earthly ministry of Jesus, and in the missionary work of the first apostles and of many generations of their followers.

Today, too often we turn to the Church and its ministries - we resort to prayer and the sacraments - we consult our clergy or seek the help of Christian friends - not as a regular and ongoing part of our pursuit of health and wholeness, but rather as an afterthought or as a last resort in moments of desperation. Unfortunately, like the vast majority of Christians in recent centuries, most of us tend to compartmentalize our lives in such a way that the life of faith and the pilgrimage of the spirit become too readily separated - indeed alienated - from the struggle of our minds and the state and condition of our bodies. Mind you, the interconnections are there - no one's mind, body, or spirit ever remain totally unaffected by the part or parts that are troubled by disease - we are all thoroughly psychosomatic beings.

It is not uncommon in our society for people to think in terms such as these:

1. In the event of physical disease or sickness, call a doctor or - God forbid - go to an emergency room. Don't notify your priest or pastor - it is far more interesting to see how long it takes him to figure out that you are seriously ill or hospitalized. Or if you're going into the hospital for major tests, don't seek emotional or spiritual support until after you have received the expected dire results. Without question it is essential for each of us to receive the best possible medical care - and due to poverty, racism, homophobia, and other social and economic factors many people do not receive adequate health care - but at the same time we all ought to avail ourselves of the Church's healing resources as well.

2. In the event of mental illness, emotional disturbance, or serious depression, see a therapist or psychiatrist, or better yet get a prescription which dulls the pain, blurs the memories, or induces sleep but fails to address the underlying problem and the real source of disease. Or pretend there is no problem. Or share the problem with no one, least of all with the pastor or Christian friend who might help bring Christ's healing love and insight to that particular situation.

3. In the event of spiritual malaise, perhaps we do talk to a cleric or other religious professional, or to a spiritually gifted Christian friend. Or perhaps in this faddish society we turn to astrology, fortune tellers, strange religious cults, or the lastest self-improvement program. Maybe what we really need is a spiritual director, a rule of life, or a fresh approach to the life of prayer. Maybe we need to address physical or emotional issues in ways which recognize that they have a spiritual dimension as well. Too often we forget that Jesus came offering health and salvation - offering healing of the body, mind, and spirit - to all who would turn to him in faith and love. Too often we forget that it is easier for us individually to contribute to our disease and unwellness than it is to work for healing and health, for wholeness and wellness. We - all of us - whatever our current state of physical, emotional, and spiritual health, need to examine ourselves, our lives and work, our stresses and recreation, our diet and sleep, our cigarette, alcohol, and drug use, and so very much more. Our decisions about our lives and lifestyles can contribute to our sickness and to our wellness, and represent important aspects of what Christian stewardship is all about.

You may rightly wonder what sort of Christian resources for healing are available to us. They are diverse and fall
within the realms of liturgy, pastoral care, communal life, education, and individual spirituality.

An essential part of most religious services is in fact some sort of confession of sin. Clearly sickness does not come as some sort of punishment for past sins. Jesus addresses this issue in St. John’s Gospel in the case of the man born blind, and the same message would seem to be implied in today’s story in Acts about the man crippled from birth. Some very evil people do live physically healthy lives into comfortable old age. Some truly angelic souls die young and in pain. Viruses erupt, accidents happen, natural disasters occur which simply do not represent a whimsical or vengeful God striking out at his people. Nonetheless we are all sinners - we all need reminders of the great importance of forgiving and of being forgiven - we can all benefit from a sense both of moral responsibility within our lives and of fresh beginnings for our lives. Regular participation in confession - whether in corporate worship or in private confession - can assist us in dealing with whatever sense of sin, guilt, alienation, and inadequacy we may be confronting in ourselves. Repentance and renewal can be valuable blessings as we begin a new week, a new year, or a new struggle. Sometimes our wrestling with sin and guilt should be aided by pastoral counseling or psychotherapy which can be avenues of God’s healing grace. Sometimes our task is to forgive the individual or group which has repeatedly hurt us, that we ourselves might set those wounds aside and journey forward as “wounded healers” who are ourselves in the process of healing and being healed. So very many of our ills of every kind are really the gaping wounds of past hurts and cherished animosities.

Holy Scripture, whenever it is read, not only recounts the story of our Salvation, but also holds an almost limitless potential for our healing and enlightenment. We especially need to reread Luke and Acts to encounter anew the central role of both healing and the pursuit of social justice in Christ’s and the early Church’s ministry. In our reading we should recall that the New Testament words for health and salvation are interchangeable. As a pastor I have grown especially attached to the rich resources of the Psalms, because in them virtually every human emotion can be shared with God - not just the polite or pretty emotions. I know too well that one of the most difficult human emotions is anger and that too many of us are uncomfortable with that anger - especially if the anger is directed towards God. Often we see anger towards God as a barrier to prayer and the religious life, when in fact the Psalms demonstrate that anger may in fact provide a grounding of reality and strength to our praying if only we will be open to its appropriate expression. Healing is most likely to occur when we really do open our lives - our minds and our souls - to God in prayer. That means sharing with God and with our conscious selves our fears, our anger, our failures and inadequacies, our sexuality and our fragile human relationships, and even those secret little uncomfortablenesses we may have about ourselves.

No discussion of the role of prayer in Christian healing would be complete without placing special emphasis on intercessory prayer. This is a ministry and discipline to which each of us is called every day of our lives. Clearly our general and particular concerns for others in intercessory prayer help to bring God’s healing love to bear on particular situations. The naming of names personalizes and concretizes our prayers. But in the final analysis no prayer is complete which does not issue forth in loving care, social concern, and personal outreach to whatever extent is possible. It is not enough to pray for the homeless, if we ignore and dehumanize them on the streets. It is not enough to pray for people with AIDS, if we exclude them from our fellowship and overlook the sociological factors which contribute to their plight. It is not enough to pray for the aged, if no one will visit them in the nursing home or recognize that new Medicare regulations have made their situations worse. The ministry of visitation in homes and hospitals by clergy and laity alike is both a mission to which each of us is called, and the necessary embodiment of our intercessory prayers. We need to touch and to be touched in our pursuit of health of body, mind, and spirit, and we need to embrace and reach out to one another. Christianity is a communal religion. The gospel is a social message. In the
final analysis we must seek healing not only for the individual but healing for families, parishes, neighborhoods, and even for our whole Church - our whole society. An essential part of the healing process is wrestling with those principalities and powers - with those systems, institutions and policies - which stand in the way of health and opportunity for all of God's children. The Eucharist, the Blessed Sacrament, represents God's most powerful healing gift to each and every one of us. In it we are fed and nurtured, we are broken and made whole again, we are loved and healed. The breaking of the Bread reminds us that in our brokenness we can yet find wholeness, and in our woundedness we can yet bring healing care to another who is in need of love. Time and again I have witnessed the remarkable way in which the Sacrament of the Eucharist, whether received weekly or daily, brings the healing love - the nurturing food - the reconciling power of Jesus to the sick, the frightened, the forgotten, and the dying.

You may ask, however, is there really such a thing as Christian healing? My answer is a strong yes! The proof is subjective, but I offer it with deep conviction.

I can tell you of the 38 year old woman who has enjoyed an eight year remission from Hodgkin's disease. She sought the best possible medical treatment, including surgery, chemotherapy, and some very disagreeable radiation treatments. She has utilized the help and support of a psychotherapist, a nutritionist, and her parish priest. She read the Simontons' book, Getting Well Again, and regularly utilizes their positive visualization techniques. She read Norman Cousin's books, and seeks on the one hand to feel in control of her own medical care, and on the other hand to cling earnestly to the ability to laugh at least once every day. She has been faithful in prayer, regular in receiving the sacraments, and active in care for others. Indeed for five years she has worked in the hospice field. Again we have the image of the wounded healer. That is Christian healing.

I could tell you countless stories of God's healing love at work in the lives of people with AIDS whom I have come to know at St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital. I could tell you of Tom who has been harassed throughout his adult life by hateful and judgmental Christian relatives, who nonetheless developed a deep interest in prayer and the laying on of hands as a result of sensitive pastoral care. I could tell you of Norman, a former drug abuser, who had thought that God was punishing him with AIDS, but who finally concluded that God loved him because He had sent him a loving pastor and friend. I could tell you of Deborah, a one-time prostitute, who was so consumed by anger that we had to engage in intensive counseling before she could find some measure of peace.

Yes, my brothers and sisters, healing is a reality in our lives. Miracles do happen. God does touch our hearts and our lives even in these troubled times. Sometimes we are healed in body, mind, or spirit in big or remarkable ways. Sometimes we are healed in little and unnoticed ways. Our faith and the faith of those who love us - the love of God who created us, the love of Christ who redeemed us, the love of the Spirit who empowers us - really do make a difference. And when they do, Christ's message to us is like the one he offered to a Samaritan leper whom he healed: “Go your way; your faith has made you well.” And our way then is none other than his way: the Way of the Cross and the Way of the Resurrection.

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THE FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION
Friday, August 15
PROCESSION & SOLEMN MASS 6:00 pm
Sermon: The Rev'd Andrew L. Sloane

Missa brevis in honorem Sancti Ioannis de Deo
("Kleine Orgelmesse")
Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)
CALENDAR FOR JULY

1 Tu. Requiem
2 W.
3 Th.
4 F. INDEPENDENCE DAY Abstinence
5 Sa. of Our Lady
6 Su. THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
7 M.
8 Tu.
9 W. Requiem
10 Th.
11 F. Benedict of Nursia, Abbot of Monte Cassino, c. 540 Abstinence
12 Sa. of Our Lady
13 Su. THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
14 M. Bonaventure, Bishop of Albano and Friar, 1274
15 Tu. Swithun, Bishop of Winchester, 862
16 W. Our Lady of Mount Carmel
17 Th. William White, Bishop of Pennsylvania, 1836
18 F. Requiem Abstinence
19 Sa. of Our Lady
20 Su. THE NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
21 M. Requiem
22 Tu. SAINT MARY MAGDALENE
23 W.
24 Th. Thomas a Kempis, Priest, 1471
25 F. SAINT JAMES THE APOSTLE Abstinence
26 Sa. The Parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary
27 Su. THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
28 M. Requiem
29 Tu. Mary and Martha of Bethany
30 W. William Wilberforce, 1833
31 Th. Ignatius of Loyola, priest (com. Joseph of Arimathea)

CALENDAR FOR AUGUST

1 F. Alphonsus Liguori, Bishop and doctor Abstinence
2 Sa. of Our Lady
3 Su. THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
4 M. Jean Baptiste Vianney, Cure d’Ars, 1859
5 Tu. Requiem
6 W. THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST
7 Th. John Mason Neale, Priest, 1866
8 F. Dominic, Priest and Friar 1221 Abstinence
9 Sa. of Our Lady
10 Su. THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
11 M. Clare, Abbess at Assisi, 1253
12 Tu. Requiem
13 W. Jeremy Taylor, Bishop of Down, Connor and Dromore, 1667
14 Th.
15 F. ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY Procession & Solemn Mass, 6 PM No Abstinence
16 Sa. Stephen of Hungary
17 Su. THE THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
18 M. William Porcher DuBose, Priest
19 Tu.
20 W. Bernard, Abbot of Clairvaux, 1153
21 Th. Requiem
22 F. Abstinence
23 Sa. of Our Lady
24 Su. THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
25 M. Louis, King of France, 1270
26 Tu. SAINT BARTHOLOMEW THE APOSTLE (transferred)
27 W. Requiem
28 Th. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, 430
29 F. Beheading of John the Baptist, martyr Abstinence
30 Sa. of Our Lady
31 Su. THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
FROM THE PARISH REGISTER
(July, 1985 - June, 1986)

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Carmen Y. Torres
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Michael F. M. Ayguasbiba
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