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## A WOUND MAP A Spiritual Exercise

A Faithful reader: Here's yet another – a seventh – in my on-going series of Spiritual Exercises. (Essay 220 presents TWO possible Spiritual Exercises.) You might want to use this privately, by yourself. Or you might use it among other Spiritual Exercises if or when you are called upon to lead a retreat.

B Previous entries in this series:

Essay 204 June 2017 Signs of the Kingdom  
Essay 208 August 2017 A Spiritual Autobiography  
Essay 211 November 2017 A Discipline of Daily Prayer  
Essay 214 December 2017 My Ten Greatest Hymns  
Essay 220 July 2018 *Benedicite Omnia Opera AND Barachah*

C One of the books that has shaped my adult life has been Arne Siirala's *The Voice of Illness: A Study in Therapy and Prophecy* (Fortress Press 1964). The Introduction alone, *The Voice of the Body*, by Gotthard Booth, MD, is worth the price of the volume.

D Following Carl Jung, Sigmund Freud's protege and later critic, both Booth and Siirala argue that we participate in our own misfortunes. Put less elegantly, even perhaps offensively, we "select" our own illnesses. (We even participate in our own accidents, according to Jung.)

E The following Exercise builds on this insight, and attempts to help you deal with your own distinct spiritual journey, seen from the standpoint of your physical and psychic wounds and scars and infirmities and illnesses and handicaps. Because the subject can be decidedly fraught, possibly delving into some psychic depths, it might be good advice to have an experienced counsellor on hand, if you were to present this exercise to a group in a retreat setting.

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- 1 On a piece of 8" x 10" paper, draw a simple outline of your body, as anatomically detailed as it needs to be. In most instances, a simple "Gingerbread Cookie" outline will probably be sufficient.
- 2 On your Gingerbread Cookie, locate all your scars and wounds, your illnesses and infirmities and handicaps. Include if possible emotional scars and wounds. (You could record a broken heart, for example, as a jagged line through a heart.) You might want to number them, or date them chronologically.
- 3 Ask yourself: What were the circumstances of your receiving this wound or illness? The time and place? The situation? Has it healed? How did the wounding and healing affect you? Affect others? You might want to jot down some notes.
- 4 Is there any sense in which you participated in this wounding or illness? In its healing? Again, you might want to make some written notes.
- 5 Can you identify grace in this wounding? In its healing? Has God's Spirit been at work here to bind up and make whole? Recall *Romans 8:28*.
- 6 Where, if anywhere, does this wounding (and healing) fit into "your story"? Why might you have "needed" this infirmity at this particular moment in your life? What is this wound or infirmity trying to "tell" you at this moment in your journey? Reflect on the witness of the saints that "suffering can sanctify." Recall that the English word "compassion" comes from two Latin roots meaning "to suffer with" or less literally, "wound love."

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