



Session 31. Anointing of the Sick: Celebration of Healing

1) Welcome

- » How was your week? What's new or noteworthy—something that happened or an idea or discovery?
- » Think of the time you were sickest in your life. How did you feel both emotionally and physically?

2) Presentation of the Theme

One of the powerful ways Catholics celebrate and receive healing in their lives is through the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. Through laying on of hands and anointing by a priest, the Church prays for the restoration of someone physically and spiritually. This sacrament is also administered with Holy Communion in the final moments of someone's life.

There is an exact Scripture reference for the practice of anointing the sick:

Is anyone among you suffering? He should pray. Is anyone in good spirits? He should sing praise. Is anyone among you sick? He should summon the presbyters of the church, and they should pray over him and anoint [him] with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up. If he has committed any sins, he will be forgiven.

~James 5:13-15

From the *US Catechism*:

"When the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick is given, the hoped-for effect is that, if it be God's will, the person be physically healed of all illness. But even if there is no physical healing, the primary effect of the Sacrament is a spiritual healing by which the sick person receives the Holy Spirit's gifts of peace and courage to deal with the difficulties that accompany serious illness or the frailty of old age" (p. 254).

Discuss your own experience of praying in the face of significant illness (yours or another's). What did you pray for? How did the ill person receive news of your prayer?

3) Discussion and Sharing

- » When in your life have you prayed the hardest for someone who was gravely ill? How did you feel about doing that?
- » There is a difference between "curing" and "healing." While curing refers to the medical or physical aspect of eliminating an illness or disease, there still may be spiritual healing even when a physical cure is not possible. Along with the medical and physical aspects of healing, how do you see the spiritual aspect fitting into the whole picture?
- » Oil is used throughout history as a sign of consolation and healing. How else might consolation be given to people who are seriously ill?



4) Questions

What questions do you have about the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick? Here we can also cover when a priest should be called and other extreme medical situations.

5) Catholic Factoid

For many years, this sacrament was called Extreme Unction, meaning the anointing one gave at the extreme, or end, of life. As a result, when a priest would visit the home of someone sick, the immediate interpretation was that this person was surely on the way to death. After the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), the more authentic meaning of this sacrament was recovered; this sacrament is now routinely celebrated by priest hospital chaplains while serving those who are sick to varying degrees as well as their families.

6) Prayer

Pray **Psalm 116:1-4** together:

*I love the Lord, who listened
to my voice in supplication,
Who turned an ear to me
on the day I called.
I was caught by the cords of death;
the snares of Sheol had seized me;
I felt agony and dread.
Then I called on the name of the Lord,
"O Lord, save my life!"*

Call to mind the names of people you know who are ill. As you are comfortable, offer prayers aloud for them. Then conclude together with the **Our Father**:

*Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us,
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.*

7) Announcements

8) Hospitality

