

St. Edward the Confessor
RCIA Class on Anointing the Sick and Dying – Feb. 6, 2011

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Bible

Genesis 1:27 God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them.

Genesis 1:31 God looked at everything he had made, and he found it very good. Evening came, and morning followed--the sixth day.

Mark 2:16-17 Some scribes who were Pharisees saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors and said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" Jesus heard this and said to them (that), "Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do. I did not come to call the righteous but sinners."

Mark 16:18 ...they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover

James 5:14 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,

Introduction (with contribution from the USCC)

All of us face death as a consequence of Original Sin. Many of us will face it through either from lingering illness and advanced age or through some accident. And yet we do not need to face it alone or without hope. Recall that Christ took on our human nature, that he truly suffered and died as we will, and that he was raised from the dead – the triumph of his faith and sacrifice over the grave.

We can find all of these hopes and assurances in the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick and Dying. We can see the compassion and love that Jesus had when he traveled healing the sick in this sacrament, which offers comfort for body, mind, and soul on those occasions when we are gravely ill (and perhaps are reminded of our mortality) or when we are facing our final moments. The Anointing of the Sick and Dying, like all sacraments, is an outward sign of an inward grace – the grace that brings us spiritual healing, and if it is God's will physical healing, and the courage to face our suffering without giving into despair.

When we face the need for the Anointing of the Sick and Dying, the Church asks us to have faith and hope in the special grace from this sacrament. We are encouraged, through our own free will, to align our suffering with that of Christ on Calvary, to draw comfort from the care of the community around us, and to believe in our salvation through Jesus and the promise of the Resurrection. And through this sacrament, we will

find the peace and courage to endure our suffering and to either receive the restoration of our health or to receive strength for our journey home.

Essentials (adapted from [SG] and [CCC])

The catechesis comes from Part 2, Section 2, Chapter 2, Articles 5 of the CCC and the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick and Dying.

- Human illness and death are a consequence of the human condition, a physical evil due to the ‘journeying’ state of the world [CCC 310] linked to sin and evil [CCC 1499]
- Human illness and impending death can be directed by human will towards or away from God. [CCC 1501]
- God can bring good from the consequences of evil [CCC 312] and the People of God are encouraged to freely unite their suffering with the suffering (passion) of Jesus Christ [CCC 1499, 1521-22]
- The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is one of the two Sacraments of Healing – the other being the Sacrament of Reconciliation
- The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is accompanied by a special grace conferred on a person when they are experiencing difficulties due to grave illness or old age. [CCC 1527]
- This sacrament reflects Christ’s compassion toward the sick and his many healings [CCC 1503]
- The proper time for receiving this holy anointing is when the believer begins to be in danger of death because of illness or old age. [CCC 1528]
- Each time a Christian falls seriously ill, he may receive the Anointing of the Sick, and also when, after he has received it, the illness worsens. [CCC 1529]
- It is not a sacrament for only those at the point of death. As soon as anyone begins to be in danger of death from sickness or old age, the fitting time for receiving the sacrament has arrived [CCC 1514]
- The sacrament may be received multiple times – either when recovering and then becoming sick again or if the condition of the person becomes more grave [CCC 1515]
- The Anointing of the Sick is a liturgical and communal celebration and it is fitting to celebrate it within the Eucharist [CCC 1517]
- Only priests and bishops are ministers of this sacrament [CCC 1516] who, in silence, lay hands on the sick (typically forehead and hands – although other body parts can be chosen) and pray over them in the faith of the Church, and then they anoint them with the Oil of the Infirm, one of the three oils used by the Church [CCC 1519]
- The sacrament is even more important for those at the point of departing from this life when it is known as ‘the sacrament of those departing’ (sacramentum exeuntium) [CCC 1523]
- In addition to the Anointing of the Sick, those dying are also offered the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist. These three sacraments, as

viaticum, constitute at the end of Christian life the sacraments that complete our earthly pilgrimage [CCC 1525]

Commentary

Some personal commentary

- The prayer on page 259 of the USCC is particularly touching
Lord Jesus Christ, you chose to share our human nature,
to redeem all people, and to heal the sick.
Look with compassion upon your servants whom we have
anointed in your name with this holy oil for the healing of
their body and spirit.
Support them with your power, comfort them with your protection,
and give them the strength to fight against evil.
Since you have given them a share in your own passion,
help them to find hope in suffering,
for you are Lord for ever and ever. Amen.
– From Pastoral Care of the Sick
- I find a great deal of comfort and inspiration from the healing story in the book of Tobit. I used to read it often when I was having troubles with my knee.
- Note that the Jesus, in healing the bodies of the sick, is reaffirming those verses in Genesis that state that God made us in his own image and that he found his work ‘very good’

Q&A

References

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| [CCC] | – Catechism of the Catholic Church |
| [Con] | - Compendium: Catechism of the Catholic Church |
| [USCC] | – United States Catholic Catechism for Adults |
| [SG] | - Study Guide for the USCC |