

Catechumenate Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA
Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time • Year B • February 15, 2015



*Compassionate God,
your Son is
the divine healer.
He took upon himself
our debt of sin and
suffered pain, torment,
and death itself
so that we might be raised
to newness of life. Anoint
us with his healing love.
Amen.*

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Sunday Word

Leviticus 13:1–2, 44–46

Psalm 32:1–2, 5, 11

1 Corinthians 10:31–11:1

Mark 1:40–45

Shunned as Vile

As they journey to the Promised Land, the community shuns those who seem to be infectious. It is a harsh reality, but one that proves effective in restricting the spreading of disease.

Embraced as an Example

Paul urges the members of the Christian community at Corinth to provide a good example to all. In the same way that he seeks to emulate the example of Christ, they are to live that example for others.

Healed as Proof

Rather than shunning one who is sick, Jesus touches a leper in order to heal him. He instructs the leper to offer proof to the Levites of his cure. Instead, the healed man himself becomes proof of Jesus' healing power.

Church Teaching: Anointing of the Sick

A Healing Ministry

Jesus showed compassion for those who were sick and called them to believe in the goodness and healing power of God, the Most High. While Jesus did not heal everyone throughout Galilee and Judea, his miracles signified the fullness of the kingdom to come, when all of creation will be made well and whole.

Jesus' healing miracles announced a much more radical mending, for it is in Christ that the Most High God reaches out to a broken humanity wounded through sin. Jesus Christ achieves God's victory over sin and death in the Paschal Mystery. The Church continues the healing mission of the Risen Lord by taking care of those who are ill, praying for them, and by celebrating the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.

The Sacrament

Though profound in its accomplishment of outreach, the Anointing of the Sick is celebrated within a relatively simple format. The Word of God is proclaimed. Then the laying on of hands in silence by either a priest or bishop occurs. The priest or bishop anoints the person who is sick with the Oil of the Sick and with prayerful words to invoke the love and mercy of the Lord through the receiving of the Holy Spirit's grace.

The anointing itself takes place as the words are spoken. The forehead is anointed, and if possible, the hands as well. If the sick person is able to, he or she can then also receive Holy Communion. This ritual may be celebrated in all sorts of venues, such as a private home, in the hospital, in a nursing facility, or in a church. Families and friends are encouraged to be present to offer the comfort and support of the entire Church community.

The Effects of the Sacrament

This Sacrament is a vehicle which conveys four distinct effects:

- ◆ *The Holy Spirit's special gift:* Strength, peace, and courage are received to help the ailing person fight against despair.
- ◆ *Oneness with Christ:* The sick person is joined to the Passion of Jesus, thus making suffering transformative and redemptive.
- ◆ *Ecclesial link:* Because they are united to the Paschal Mystery, recipients of the Sacrament contribute to the holiness of the Church,
- ◆ *Preparation for the last journey:* When celebrated for a dying person, it becomes final preparation for Heaven; final Eucharist in this instance is called Viaticum.

Distinctiveness of Church Teaching

This Sacrament may be celebrated many times in the life of a believer. Jesus Christ is truly the Divine Physician, the One who gave of his life that we might have life to the fullest.

Nothing can separate us from God's love, not even pain, suffering, and death. Even these situations can be avenues that express faith. In all circumstances of life, we continue to praise God who heals and offers us eternal life.

Key Terms

DIVINE PHYSICIAN

Title of Christ who shows his preferential love for the sick throughout the centuries through the healing ministry of Christians (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1503).

SACRAMENT

Effective sign of God's grace instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church so that we might have a share in divine life (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1131).

VIATICUM

The Eucharist that is received by a person who is dying; the spiritual food to help one pass over to God from this world (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1524).

Voices of Faith

He touches the leper to signify that he heals not as servant but as Lord. For the leprosy did not defile his hand, but his holy hand cleansed the leprous body.

—Saint John Chrysostom

We must above all accept the light of revelation not only insofar as it expresses the transcendent order of justice but also insofar as it illuminates this order with Love, as the definitive source of everything that exists. Love is also the fullest source of the answer to the question of the meaning of suffering. This answer has been given by God to [us] in the cross of Jesus Christ.

—Saint John Paul II

Further Reading

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 1500 (human illness), 1504 (in Sacraments Christ touches us), 1509 (healing ministry of Church), 1511 (Sacrament of the Sick)

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults:

Chapter 19, especially the section entitled, "Importance of the Sacrament for the Community," page 256

Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church:

313 (sickness in the Old Testament), 315 (ministry of the Church), 316 (reception of this Sacrament), 320 (Viaticum)