

Doctrinal Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA The Anointing of the Sick

“Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven.” (James 5:14–15)

Insight

When and how have you shown care for someone who was sick or suffering?

The Henry and McGuire families were next-door neighbors and also good friends. The children got along, and the adults often talked and relaxed together. So when Mrs. McGuire’s cancer and subsequent chemo treatments weakened her, confining her to bed and preventing her from being the active mom she had been, Mrs. Henry stepped in to help.

Mrs. Henry cooked for both families. She made sure that the routines of the McGuire children weren’t disrupted. She handled additional shopping, laundry, and cleaning chores. In addition, Mrs. Henry would frequently visit Mrs. McGuire and would often put a cool washcloth on her forehead or hold her hand. They didn’t always talk. Being present was enough—for both of them.

For Reflection . . .

Sickness and suffering are some of the worst problems confronting us, for in them we experience weakness, human limitations, and we glimpse death.

What is it you most fear about being sick?

Who has given you an example of courage and faith in the face of illness? How have they done so?

Additional Background

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 1499–1532

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults: pages 249–259

Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church: 313–320

Church Teaching

The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is meant for all those experiencing a serious, life-threatening illness or a debilitating physical or mental condition, or suffering the weaknesses associated with being elderly. If these conditions persist, the Sacrament may be repeated. This Sacrament may also be celebrated prior to serious surgery or when an elderly person’s frailty becomes more pronounced. In all of these diverse situations where the Sacrament is celebrated, it conveys the consolation of the Lord and the concern of the Church.

A priest can administer the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick at a person’s home, in an institutional setting, or in the church. The priest symbolizes the care of the entire Church community, which prays for all the sick.

The effects conveyed by this Sacrament are:

- ◆ *the particular grace of the Holy Spirit* for strength, peace, and courage to face sickness, debilitation, or impending death without giving up in despair or discouragement; to assist persons who are sick, healing their soul and even their bodies if it is God’s will;
- ◆ *union with the Passion of Christ*, so the sick consecrate themselves to the redemptive sacrifice of Jesus, thus uniquely participating in the saving work of the Lord;
- ◆ an ecclesial grace whereby the sick contribute to the good of the Church even as the Church intercedes for them;
- ◆ *preparation for the final journey* when celebrated with one who is at the point of death, completing their conformity to the Death and Resurrection of Christ, just as Baptism began it and Confirmation sealed it.