

SACRAMENT OF ANOINTING

**THE CHURCH'S
PRAYER FOR
THE SICK**

Catholic
UPDATE
VIDEO
TEACHING
SEGMENT

LEADER'S GUIDE

PLEASE NOTE: This leader's guide was originally written for those using this video program in its VHS format. Those now using this program on DVD may find some references that do not apply to their use (i.e., directions for locating segments, time notations, etc.). We trust that both VHS- and DVD-users will find this guide a valuable resource.

SACRAMENT OF ANOINTING
The Church's Prayer for the Sick

Overview of the Program

This program offers viewers an overview of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick with emphasis on its communal celebration and the healing of the whole person—body, mind and spirit. Father Tom Richstatter, O.F.M., is the teacher for this *Catholic Update Video* teaching segment. He teaches liturgy and sacramental theology at St. Meinrad School of Theology. Within his presentation are the testimonies of three individuals who share about their personal experiences of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, celebrated for themselves or loved ones. An outline of Fr. Tom's presentation follows.

I. When the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick becomes a normal part of Catholic experience, the Second Vatican Council's renewal of the sacrament will be achieved.

- A. This renewal is based on the Church's call to do what Jesus did.
- B. Healing was essential to Jesus' mission and to the mission of his followers.
- C. The Church itself is to be an instrument of healing—of body, mind and spirit.

II. Over time the focus of the sacrament shifted; the forgiveness of sins was emphasized over physical healing.

- A. People delayed celebrating this sacrament until they were near death.
- B. The sacrament became known as "Extreme Unction."

III. Vatican II returned this sacrament to its original purpose—it's for all who are seriously ill.

- A. It is now more properly called “The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick” and is being experienced by more Catholics.
- B. The way we think about this sacrament is changing:
 - 1. It is a community celebration.
 - 2. Sickness involves more than bodily illness.
 - 3. Anointing heals us through faith.

IV. The sacrament is celebrated to its fullest when celebrated in a public, communal setting.

- A. Liturgy is not a private function; it belongs to the whole Church.
- B. Vatican II's renewal of worship stated a preference for communal over individual celebrations.
- C. Communal celebrations of the sacrament are becoming more common, often occurring within the community Eucharist.
- D. Communal celebrations speak of key themes of Christian life: mortality, vocation, responsibility, limits, suffering and caregiving.
- E. Communal celebrations challenge a society that stresses individuality and that avoids discussing limits or mortality.

V. This sacrament is celebrated in the following order within a Mass.

- A. The Mass begins as usual followed by a welcome and special prayers for those to be anointed.

- B. The readings may be from the Sunday or from special readings provided for the celebration of this sacrament.
- C. Following the homily there is a litany of prayers for those who will be anointed and those who care for them.
- D. The priest lays his hands on the heads of those to be anointed in imitation of Jesus' manner of healing.
- E. Oil is brought to the altar, and the priest says a prayer over it.
- F. The priest uses the blessed oil to make the Sign of the Cross on the forehead of the sick person and says, "Through this holy anointing may the Lord in his love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit" to which everyone responds, "Amen."
- G. The priest anoints the palms of the sick person's hands with the Sign of the Cross while saying, "May the Lord who frees you from sin save you and raise you up" to which all respond, "Amen."
- H. Bread and wine are brought to the altar, and the Mass continues as usual.

VI. When the sacrament is celebrated in a home or hospital setting, many of these same elements are present but adapted to the situation.

VII. Today we know that physical health is related to mental and spiritual health; there is a holistic unity of body, mind and spirit.

- A. Life stresses (i.e., divorce, overwork, tensions, fear, anxiety) affect our mind and body.

- B. Addictions, mental illness, and major surgery are all situations in which Christ's power can be invoked in the sacrament.
- C. Spouses or caregivers of the seriously ill can also be anointed.
- D. Those experiencing the fears, isolation, limitations and dependence that often come with aging can be anointed.

VIII. The Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick is an act of faith, gracing the whole person—body, mind and spirit.

- A. The healing it offers is different than medicine or surgery.
- B. Healing always takes place but is not restricted to physical healing; we pray that the sick be healed in body, mind and spirit.
- C. The sacrament can help us gain insight into the spiritual meaning of human suffering.
- D. Only God knows what kind of healing the sick need most.
- E. The sacrament doesn't remove or explain the mystery of human suffering but it can draw us closer to Christ who also suffered and who now reigns triumphant.

Suggestions for Use

Use it to prepare your community for a parish celebration of this sacrament, to help individuals who are fearful about celebrating this sacrament, and to instruct catechumens and candidates about this sacrament of healing.

Some specific settings for using this video presentation are:

- a short information session before or after Sunday Eucharist in the weeks prior to a scheduled communal parish celebration of the Sacrament of Anointing. The viewing of the video may be followed by a question-and-answer period.
- sent along with those who visit and bring Communion to sick and homebound parishioners. These ministers may view the video with the sick parishioners or may leave the video for them to view alone or with family members and caregivers.
- a training session for parish ministers to the sick to help them better understand this sacrament and the situations when it is appropriate to encourage parishioners to celebrate it.
- a session of the RCIA or other adult faith formation gathering at which this sacrament of God's healing is explored.
- in-service workshops for pastoral care programs in hospitals or other clinical care settings.

Suggested Process

Since this video may be viewed in group settings, we offer here a simple process to follow which can be adapted for the needs of a particular audience.

1. *Setting the Environment:* A central table may be set with items that are used in the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick (e.g., oil, *Pastoral Care of the Sick*) and symbols of illness (e.g., crutches, prescription medicine bottles, an empty bottle of liquor, etc.).
2. *Gathering:* Invite participants to gather around the table for an opening prayer or song. Choose a song familiar to the participants on the theme of surrender or God's healing. Use the following or similar

opening prayer: *Loving God, we gather today to reflect on the many ways you offer your healing touch to us and others through the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. Each of us needs healing in some way and hold dear others who are suffering. Open us to your healing and to new understandings of this celebration of your loving care for us. Amen.*

3. *Sharing My Story*: Invite personal reflection and group sharing on the question “When have I had an experience of healing—of body, mind or spirit? What did I learn about God through this experience?”
4. *Relating My Story to the Church’s Story*: Show video presentation and discuss new insights gained about the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. Use the following discussion questions.
5. *Responding in Life and Faith*: Close the session with a time for prayers of petition. Invite participants to pray for those in their lives who are in need of God’s healing touch—whether in body, mind or spirit. End these petitions with the Lord’s Prayer and Sign of Peace.

Questions for Reflection and Sharing

1. What new understanding do you have about the Sacrament of Anointing?
2. What new understanding do you have about sickness and healing?
3. Why is this sacrament best celebrated communally?
4. Have you ever been anointed through the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick? What was your experience?
5. What have you learned from your personal suffering? Is there any value in suffering?

Resources for Further Study

1) Scripture

Some Scriptural basis for this sacrament is
Luke 4:40; Mark 6:7-13; John 20:20b-23;
and James 5:14-15.

2) *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

References to the Sacrament of the Anointing of the
Sick in the *Catechism* can be found in 1499-1532.

3) Available from St. Anthony Messenger Press

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