

QUO VADIS

SACRAMENTS OF HEALING: PART 2

Where are you going?



“DO NOT SAY, ‘I AM ONLY A YOUTH’; FOR TO ALL TO WHOM I SEND YOU YOU SHALL GO, AND WHATEVER I COMMAND YOU SHALL SPEAK.”

Jeremiah 1:6

A Sacrament of Healing: Anointing of the Sick and the Catholic Faith.

By Mary Clare Pieczynski

The sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is one of God’s precious gifts to the world that often we do not appreciate as we should. The Anointing of the Sick is not only a source of grace for the soul as when it is in danger of death but it also helps unite the soul to Christ’s sufferings to help the soul endure until the end to be saved (Matt 24:13). We will briefly examine what the scriptural basis of this sacrament is along with its effects and why it is so important. Further, we’ll learn about who can receive the sacrament of the sick and understand why it is not only a sacrament for the dying.

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History of the Sacrament: Its Biblical Basis

Though the Council of Trent solemnly defined (the council began on December 13 1545, and ended December 4 1563) that there were seven sacraments in the Catholic Church that does not mean that the sacraments began then. In fact, the Council of Trent proclaimed that the seven sacraments were instituted by Christ Himself. Come on now, you might ask, nowhere do I see in the Bible that Jesus said that “I institute 7 sacraments which will be the normative means of grace for my followers.” But a close look at

Scripture shows us that the seven sacraments are indeed within the pages of the Holy Writ and our discussion will take us to learn about where we can find the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick within this sacred text.

Let's begin with remembering that Jesus is the Divine Physician, of not only our souls but bodies. The graces from this sacrament come from Christ and His passion and death for "He took our infirmities and bore our diseases" (Isaiah 53:4, Matt. 8:17). Jesus not only has the power to say to the paralytic that his sins are forgiven but also "take up your mat and go home." (Matt 9:1-7) The power to heal is given to the Apostles that they exercise in Jesus' name (Matt 10:8, Acts 3:6). Mark 6:13 relates how "they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them" and James writes in his epistle "Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven" (James 5:14-15). Further, St. Paul writes "Through the Spirit one receives faith; by the same Spirit another is given the gift of healing, and still another miraculous powers" (I Corinthians 12:9-10).

In summary, the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick biblically grounded.

Who Can Receive the Sacrament

Sometimes, we can experience confusion when we consider who can receive the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. The Catholic Church teaches that a person does not have to be at the point of death to receive this

Pope Quote of the Month

[I]N THE EPISTLE OF THE BLESSED APOSTLE JAMES... 'IF ANYONE AMONG YOU IS SICK, LET HIM CALL THE PRIESTS...'. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THIS ANOINTING OUGHT TO BE INTERPRETED OR UNDERSTOOD OF THE SICK FAITHFUL, WHO CAN BE ANOINTED WITH THE HOLY OIL OF CHRISM...IT IS A KIND OF SACRAMENT."
**POPE INNOCENT [REGN. A.D. 401-416],
TO DECENTIUS, 25,8,11 (A.D.
416)**

though sacrament, of course those who are dying are encouraged to seek this sacrament. The Catechism states "The anointing of the sick is not a sacrament for those only who are at the point of death. Hence, as soon as anyone of the faithful begins to be in danger of death from sickness or old age, the fitting time for him to receive this sacrament has certainly already arrived" (CCC 1514).

The Second Vatican Council taught that "Extreme Unction,' which may also and more fittingly be called 'Anointing of the Sick,' is not a sacrament for those only who are at the point of death. Hence, as soon as any one of the faithful begins to be in danger of death from sickness or old age, the appropriate time for him to receive this sacrament has certainly already arrived." (Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum concilium*, 73). Furthermore, Paul VI wrote in his apostolic constitution on the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick that "this sacrament can be repeated if the sick person having once received the Anointing, recovers and then again falls sick, or if, in the course of the same illness, the danger becomes more acute." Therefore, the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is not only for those in danger of death and it is a sacrament that can be repeated if the need presents itself.

Effects of the Sacrament

Now that we understand a little of the history of the sacrament and who can receive it, let us now turn to discovering more about what the sacrament does. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

**"Jesus is the
Divine
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beautifully states ““The special grace of the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick has as its effects: the uniting of the sick person to the passion of Christ, for his own good and that of the whole Church; the strengthening, peace, and courage to endure in a Christian manner the sufferings of illness or old age; the forgiveness of sins, if the sick person was not able to obtain it through the sacrament of penance; the restoration of health, if it is conducive to the salvation of his soul; the preparation for passing over to eternal life” (CCC 1532). In essence, the sacrament brings us close to God as we prepare to be united with Him forever in heaven. The Council of Trent explains, “This reality is in fact the grace of the Holy Spirit, whose anointing takes away sins, if any still remain to be taken away, and the remnants of sin; it also relieves and strengthens the soul of the sick person, arousing in him a great confidence in the divine mercy, whereby being thus sustained he more easily bears the trials and labors of his sickness, more

easily resists the temptations of the devil 'lying in wait' (Gen. 3:15), and sometimes regains bodily health, if this is expedient for the health of the soul.” (Sess. XIV, De extr. unct. chapter 2: CT, VII, 1)

In summary, the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is a priceless gift to the Christian life. Through this sacrament one is prepared to meet the Creator and strengthened for the journey to eternal life. To conclude, the Anointing of the Sick brings the soul grace and comfort as it seeks to draw close to the Source of all healing, the Triune God.

Scripture Quote of the Month

**“They will lay
their hands on
the sick, and
they will
recover.”
Mark 16:18**

BOOK OF THE MONTH

Sacraments in Scripture

By Tim Gray

Sacraments in Scripture delves into the biblical foundations of the sacraments, the seven masterpieces of God's love. Tim Gray guides readers through the Gospels, showing Christ's deliberate acts to inaugurate these sacred signs of the New Covenant. With review questions at the end of each chapter, this study is ideal for both group and individual use, and is perfect for learning how to answer contemporary objections to the sacraments.

Sacraments in Scripture is available from the Coming Home Network at 740-450-1175 or www.chresources.com

Anointing of the Sick: Ancient Practice in the Church

By Peter Rowe

One of the Seven Sacraments is the Anointing of the Sick, also called “extreme unction”. What is the Biblical root of this Sacrament? What is its historical nature in the Fathers and the Councils? How is it celebrated today?

Over the past couple of months we have discussed various sacraments: Initiation, (Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist), and the Sacrament of Confession (or Reconciliation) There are two Sacraments of Healing (*Catechism* 1421), Confession and the Anointing of the Sick.

What are the Biblical roots of this Sacrament? First, there is the famous passage in James: “Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven” (*James* 5: 14-15). Another passage is found in Mark 6: 13, “And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them.” The tradition of the Church has pointed to these two passages as witness of an apostolic practice of laying hands on the sick.

Before we go further, let us talk about the Catholic teaching on illness. “Illness and suffering have always been among the gravest problems confronted in human life” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1500). How does a sick person look at God? He cries out in

his pain and suffering for healing (1502). In Christ Jesus, God shows His compassion on the sick (*Catechism* 1503).

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, this is a Sacrament especially for the sick (1511). This Sacrament was realized as such as early as the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople (*Catechism* 1510).

The early Fathers frequently witness to this ancient Christian practice. (I thank the *Faith of the Early Fathers* of William Jurgens for its references on this Sacrament!):

Origen writes, “In addition to these there is also a seventh, albeit hard and laborious: the remission of sins through penance, when the sinner washes his pillow in tears, when his tears are day and night his nourishment, and when he does not shrink from declaring his sin to a priest of the Lord and from seeking medicine, after the manner of him who says, “I said, ‘To the Lord I will accuse myself of my iniquity’, and you forgave the disloyalty of my heart. In this way there is fulfilled that too, which the Apostle James says: “If then, there is anyone sick, let him call the presbyters of the Church, and let

them impose hands upon him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him.” (On Leviticus, *Jurgens* 698; *Jurgens*’ references are to paragraph numbers).

St. John Chrysostom writes: The Jewish priests had authority to release the body from leprosy, or, rather, not to release it but only to examine those who were already released, and you know how much the office of priest was contended for at that time. But our priests have received authority to deal, not with

Church Fathers Quote

"O God who sanctifiest this oil as Thou dost grant unto all who are anointed and receive of it the hallowing wherewith Thou didst anoint kings and priests and prophets, so grant that it may give strength to all that taste of it and health to all that use it."
Hippolytus of Rome (c.A.D. 215)

bodily leprosy, but spiritual uncleanness — not to pronounce it removed after examination, but actually and absolutely to take it away. Wherefore they who despise these priests would be far more accursed than Dathan and his company, and deserve more severe

punishment. For the latter, although they laid claim to the dignity which did not belong to them, nevertheless had an excellent opinion concerning it, and this they evinced by the great eagerness with which they pursued it; but these men, when the office has been better regulated, and has received so great a development, have displayed an audacity which exceeds that of the others, although manifested in a contrary way. For there is not an equal amount of contempt involved in aiming at an honor which does not pertain to one, and in despising such great advantages, but the latter exceeds the former as much as scorn differs from admiration. What soul then is so sordid as to despise such great advantages? None whatever, I should say, unless it were one subject to some demoniacal impulse. For I return once more to the point from which I started: not in the way of chastising only, but also in the way of benefiting, God has bestowed a power on priests greater than that of our natural parents. The two indeed differ as much as the present and the future life. For our natural parents generate us unto this life only, but the others unto that which is to come. And the former would not be able to avert death from their offspring, or to repel the assaults of disease; but these others have often saved a sick soul, or one which was on the point of perishing, procuring for some a milder chastisement, and preventing others from falling altogether, not only by instruction and admonition, but also by the assistance wrought through prayers. For not only at

the time of regeneration, but afterwards also, they have authority to forgive sins. Is any sick among you? it is said, let him call for the elders of the Church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up: and if he have committed sins they shall be forgiven him.” (*The Priesthood*, 3, 6, New Advent Collection of Fathers); Jurgens 1120)

Serapion writes the following prayer: We beseech You, Savior of all men, You that have all virtue and power, Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and we pray that You send from heaven the healing power of the Only-begotten Son on this oil, so that for those (who are anointed *or* who partake

of these creatures of Yours,) it may be effective for the casting out of every disease and every bodily infirmity, for an antidote against every demon, for escape from every unclear spirit, for the expulsion of every evil spirit, for the banishing of every fever and chill and every weakness, for good grace and remission of sins, for a remedy unto life and deliverance, for health and integrity of soul, of body, and of spirit, for perfect vigor” (*The Sacramentary* 29, 1; *Jurgens* 1241).

A short sentence from St. Ambrose of Milan: “Why then do you impose hands and believe it to be the effect of the blessing if perchance some sick person recovers?” (*On Penance*, 1, 8, 36; *Jurgens*

Cyril of Alexandria says, “But you, if some part of your body is suffering, and you really believe that saying the words, “Lord Sabaoth!” or some such appellation which divine Scripture attributes to God in respect to His nature has the power to drive that evil from you, go ahead and pronounce those words, making them a prayer for yourself. You will be doing better than you would by just uttering those names, and you will be giving the glory to God and not to impure spirits. I recall also the saying in divinely inspired Scripture: “Is anyone among you ill? Let him call in the presbyters of the Church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he be in sins they shall be forgiven

Catechism Quote of the Month

"This sacred anointing of the sick was instituted by Christ our Lord as a true and proper sacrament of the New Testament. It is alluded to indeed by Mark, but is recommended to the faithful and promulgated by James the apostle and brother of the Lord" (CCC 1511)

him” (*Worship and Adoration in Spirit and in Truth* 6; Jurgens 2092)

A final quote: “As often as some infirmity over takes a man, let him who is ill receive the Body and Blood of Christ; let him humbly and in faith ask the presbyters for blessed oil, to anoint his body, so that what was written may be fulfilled in him: “Is anyone among you sick? Let him bring in the presbyters, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he be in sins, they will be forgiven him.” See to it brethren,

that whoever is ill hasten to the church, both that he may receive health of body and will merit to obtain the forgiveness of his sins” (St. Caesar of Arles, Sermons, 13, (265, 3); Jurgens 2234).

How is this Sacrament celebrated today? The *Catechism* calls it “fitting” to celebrate it in the Mass (1517). What exactly takes place in the Latin Church?

“The celebration of the sacrament includes the following principal elements: the “priests of the Church”—in silence—lay hands on the sick; they pray over them in the

faith of the Church—this is the epiclesis proper to this sacrament; they then anoint them with oil blessed, if possible, by the bishop.” (*Catechism* 1519).

What are the effects? First, there is the gift of the Spirit to strengthen the sick or dying person. There is also union with Christ’s passion. One great feature of the Sacrament is that it brings graces for the entire Church (*Catechism* 1522).

As, in all sacraments, the Priest acts *in persona Christi*, so it is not the Priest who anoints, it is Christ who anoints through the Priest.

Are you a teen or young adult on the journey into the Catholic Church?

Quo Vadis exists to provide fellowship and support to all youth who wish to draw closer to Jesus Christ and His One, Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, especially the youth of converting Protestant clergy or lay people.

For more information please contact Mary Clare Piecynski
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