



THE CHRISTIAN MYSTERY

THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK

Biblical Reflection: Jas 5:13-16

The Church believes and confesses that among the seven sacraments there is one especially intended to strengthen those who are being tried by illness, the Anointing of the Sick. (CCC 1511)

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” (SC 73). (CCC 1514)

The celebration of the sacrament includes the following principal elements: the “priests of the Church” (Jas 5:14) –in silence—lay hands on the sick; they pray over them in the faith of the Church (cf. Jas 5:15)—this is the epiclesis proper to this sacrament; they then anoint them with oil blessed, if possible, by the bishop. These liturgical actions indicate what grace this sacrament confers upon the sick. (CCC 1519)

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)

“By the sacred anointing of the sick and the prayer of the priests the whole Church commends those who are ill to the suffering and glorified Lord, that he may raise them up and save them. And indeed she exhorts them to contribute to the good of the People of God by freely uniting themselves to the Passion and death of Christ”
Vatican Council II, LG 11. (CCC 1499)

Questions for discussion:

- **How do you react when confronted with the sickness and old age of the people you love?**
- **Do you have any experience of being sick, injured, or confined to a hospital bed?**
- **How could you prepare best for your own death? Do you ever think about it?**
- **Have you ever received the Anointing of the Sick or have you been present while someone else received it? Please share your experience with the group.**

Further reading: Catechism of the Catholic Church, numbers 1499-1532