

**From the P.A.'s Desk****Sacraments of God's presence and care:**

In the Catholic Church, we have seven Sacraments which celebrate how God comes to us in the physical world, through signs and symbols, of spoken words, gestures, bread and wine (eating and drinking), touching, and oil for moisturizing and soothing. Our seven sacraments come out of life itself, and what we are ritually doing in the seven sacraments are things we are doing in our everyday lives as well. The Church has ritually highlighted (made into sacraments of God's presence) the things we do each and every day. We eat and drink daily (Eucharist), and sickness and healing is a part of everyday life (Anointing of the Sick). We all know the brokenness of life, and if we choose to go on living in this world, we must take the broken moments of life, piece them back together again, and go on with life and living – the best we can (Reconciliation). We all know of the power of love (Matrimony), and we all value the need for leadership and service on behalf of the whole community (Holy Orders). We have seven Church Sacraments because the things we do sacramentally in church, are the things we do every day.

Often people have a hard time naming all seven sacraments, but a good way to remember them is in terms of three categories: Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist); Sacraments of Healing (Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick); and Sacraments of Service (Marriage and Holy Orders).

As in previous years, we will have a special Anointing of the Sick Mass in October, and it's a great way for all of us to see what the Anointing of the Sick looks like.

**Anointing of the Sick Mass:**

Last year we as a parish did an Anointing of the Sick Mass for anyone in our parish in need of God's healing presence and the prayers of this community of faith.

When people are sick or suffering – especially for a long time or with a terminal disease – they become discouraged, depressed, angry and afraid. Anointing of the Sick can give people the grace, strength and encouragement to bear their illnesses with hope and abandonment to God. The sacrament also assures people that they are not alone in their suffering, that God is with them and the Christian community is praying for that individual. Anyone who is suffering from chronic illness, disease, or prolonged pain is encouraged to be anointed, and it may also be appropriate for people suffering emotional and psychological pain.

Even if people are not in need of Anointing, it is a good practice for a faith community (especially younger members of the church) to see and witness what the Anointing of the Sick looks like.

**We will have an Anointing Mass Saturday and Sunday, October 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> at our regular weekend Mass times.**

Those being Anointed can either sit up in the front (if unable to move well), or anywhere in the church. At the proper time we will call you forward.

The actual anointing of the sick person is done on the forehead, with the prayer "Through this holy anointing may the Lord in his love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit", and on the hands, with the prayer "May the Lord who frees you from sin save you and raise you up". To each prayer the sick person, if able, responds: "Amen."

### The Theology of Anointing of the Sick:

Suffering and illness have always been among the greatest problems that trouble the human spirit. Jesus understood and shared in that suffering with us, but his passion transformed pain and death into the glory of the resurrection. Our life in him helps us grasp the mystery of suffering more deeply and bear our pain with greater courage.

Although Christians have always anointed and prayed for the sick, our celebration and even our understanding of the sacrament has changed throughout history. Today, many Catholics are not sure what the sacrament is, when it should be celebrated, and who should participate. As a result, some people who would benefit from the sacrament do not request it, avoid it, or only ask for it when the fear of death is near.

The history of the sacrament originated in the healing ministry of Jesus. In the first century and in Jesus' culture, sickness was often associated with sin. People who were ill suffered not only from the illness but also from the pain and guilt of isolation. As Jesus healed, he touched people with God's healing love, freed them from the pain and guilt of isolation, and restored them to their rightful places within the community.

The early Christians, knowing that the spirit of Christ was among them, continued his healing ministry. In James 5:14-15 we read, "Is anyone among you sick? They should summon the presbyters of the church, and they should pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise them up. If they have committed any sins, they will be forgiven."

By the Middle Ages, perhaps due to the high mortality rate and the emphasis on the terrors of hell, the sacrament of the sick lost its association with healing, lost its communal dimension, and became a means of purifying the soul. The prayers emphasizing forgiveness and personal salvation, lead to it being seen as "last rites." Although there is an option for "last rites" within the Anointing of the Sick sacrament, this was not the original meaning of the sacrament.

The Second Vatican Council in the early 60's reclaimed the original character of this sacrament. Today, it emphasizes the concern of the Church for anyone sick and suffering, and the mental and physical healing power of Christ.

The anointing of the sick is a sacrament of the Church in which the priest prays, lays hands and anoints the sick person with blessed oil. It may be preceded by the sacrament of reconciliation and followed by the Eucharist.

The sacrament may be repeated if the person suffers from a different illness or injury, or if the same illness or condition becomes more serious. Elderly people may be anointed if they have become weakened even though no serious illness is present.

Anyone who is dangerously ill due to sickness, injury or old age may be anointed. The sacrament is for anyone with serious mental or emotional illness as well. The rite states clearly that a person should be anointed at the beginning of illness, or before surgery whenever a serious condition is the reason for the surgery. The anointing may be repeated if the same illness or condition becomes more serious.

Although some of our sacraments can be celebrated privately when absolutely necessary, the best way to celebrate a sacrament is publically, when the whole community is present in prayer. **The Anointing of the Sick will be celebrated on Saturday and Sunday, October 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> at our regular weekend Mass times.**