

Living in the Kingdom

Lesson 19: The Anointing of the Sick

"I Am the Lord who Heals You"



CCC 1499

1. 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.

CCC 1500-01

2. Illness and suffering are among the gravest problems in human life. In illness, man experiences his powerlessness and his finitude. It can lead to anguish and even despair and revolt against God. But it can also make a person more mature, helping him discern what is essential in his life. Often illness provokes a search for God and a return to him.

The Sick Person before God

CCC 1502
Isa 38:1-5

3. The man of the Old Testament he laments his illness before God, Master of life and death, and implores healing from Him. Illness becomes a way to conversion; God's forgiveness initiates the healing.

Ex 15:26, Num 21:9, Ps 38:1-5
Job

4. Illness is mysteriously linked to sin and evil. Faithfulness to God according to his law restores life.

Isa 53:11, 33:24

5. Isaiah hints that suffering can also have a redemptive meaning for the sins of others. God will one day usher in a time when he will pardon every offense and heal every illness.

CCC 1503

6. Christ's compassion toward the sick and his many healings are a sign that "God has visited his people" and that the Kingdom of God is close at hand.

CCC 1504

7. Often Jesus asks the sick to believe. He makes use of signs to heal: spittle and the laying on of hands, mud and washing. The sick try to touch him, "for power came forth from him and healed them all." In the sacraments Christ continues to "touch" us in order to heal us.

CCC 1505
Isa 53:4

8. Christ not only allows himself to be touched by the sick, but he makes their miseries his own. His physical healings announced a more radical healing: the victory over sin and death through his Passover. On the cross Christ took away the sin of the world, of which illness is only a consequence. By his passion and death Christ has given a new meaning to suffering: it can unite us with his redemptive Passion.

CCC 1506
Mk 6:12-13

9. Christ invites his disciples to follow him by taking up their cross. He makes them share in his ministry of compassion and healing. But not all prayers obtain healing. Suffering has redemptive value.

2 Cor 12:9
Col 1:24

10. Jesus did not come to banish suffering but to give it meaning and redemptive power. Redemptive suffering gives us the dignity to share in Jesus' suffering for the Church. It purifies us towards holiness and configures us to Christ by the Holy Spirit, as well as greatly benefiting the Body of Christ

<p>CCC 1510-13 Jas 5:14-15</p>	<p>The Anointing of the Sick</p> <p>11. The rite of the anointing of the sick is one of the seven sacraments. The sacrament is given to those who are seriously ill by anointing them on the forehead and hands with blessed oil saying:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p><i>"Through this holy anointing may the Lord in his love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit. May the Lord who frees you from sin save you and raise you up."</i> (CCC 1513)</p> </div>
<p>CCC 1514-15</p>	<p>12. The sacrament is not only for those at the point of death. Each time a Christian falls seriously ill, he may receive the Anointing of the Sick, and also when, after he has received it, the illness worsens. The sacrament may be received prior to a serious operation.</p>
<p>CCC 1516</p>	<p>13. Only priests (and bishops) are ministers of the Anointing of the Sick.</p>
<p>CCC 1517-19</p>	<p>14. How is the sacrament celebrated? It may be celebrated within the Eucharist, or preceded by the sacrament of Penance. The Liturgy of the Word, preceded by an act of repentance, opens the celebration. The words of Christ awaken the faith of the sick person to ask the Lord for the strength of his Spirit.</p>
<p>CCC 1520-23, 1532</p>	<p>15. The principal elements of the sacrament:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The priests, in silence, lay hands on the sick; b. They pray over them in the faith of the Church; c. They then anoint them with oil blessed, if possible, by the bishop. <p>16. The effects of the sacrament:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The uniting of the sick person to the passion of Christ; b. Strengthening, peace, and courage to endure illness or old age; c. The forgiveness of sins, if not obtained through Reconciliation; d. The restoration of health, if conducive to the salvation of his soul; e. The preparation for passing over to eternal life.
<p>CCC 1524-25</p>	<p>17. Viaticum is the last Eucharist - the seed of eternal life and the power of resurrection, and now the sacrament of passing over from death to life, from this world to the Father. Penance, the Anointing of the Sick and the Eucharist as viaticum are "the sacraments that prepare for our heavenly homeland" and complete the earthly pilgrimage.</p>

Questions for Discussion

1. How does the Christian view of suffering differ from that of our culture?
2. How does Christ's suffering and death take our sin and illness and use it as a means of redemption?
3. Why did Jesus do so much healing when he was on earth?
4. Is suffering a consequence of sin?
5. How could redemptive suffering give more meaning to our daily lives? Do we expect too much physical healing as a result of our prayers? Have you ever experienced God's presence in the midst of suffering?