

ANOINTING OF THE SICK
CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION AND ST. BERNARD'S CATHOLIC CHURCH
Saturday and Sunday, October 21 and 22, 2017, at all weekend Masses

Is anyone among you sick? He should summon the presbyters of the church, and they should pray over him and anoint [him] with oil in the name of the Lord... James 5:14

Pope Francis February 26, 2014 Catechesis on the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick

Dear Brothers and Sisters, good morning!

Today I would like to speak to you of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, **which enables us to touch with our hand God's compassion for man** (emphases—Fr. Gregory). In the past it was called "Extreme Unction," because it was understood as spiritual comfort in the imminence of death. To speak, instead, of the "Anointing of the Sick," **helps us to widen our look on the experience of sickness and suffering**, in the horizon of God's mercy.

1. There is a biblical icon that expresses in all its depth the mystery that shines in the Anointing of the Sick: it is **the parable of the "Good Samaritan,"** in Luke's Gospel (10:30-35). Every time we celebrate this Sacrament **the Lord Jesus, in the person of the priest, comes close to the one who suffers and is gravely ill or elderly.** The parable says that the Good Samaritan takes care of the suffering man, pouring oil and wine on his wounds. Oil makes us think of that which is blessed every year by the Bishop in the Chrism Mass of Holy Thursday, precisely in view of the Anointing of the Sick. The wine, instead, is the sign of the love and grace of Christ that gushes forth from the gift of his life for us and is expressed in all its richness in the sacramental life of the Church. Finally, the suffering person is entrusted to an innkeeper, so that he can continue to take care of him, regardless of expense. Now, **who is this innkeeper?** It is **the Church, the Christian community;** it is we to whom every day the Lord Jesus entrusts those who are afflicted, in body and spirit, so that we continue to pour on them, without measure, all his mercy and salvation.

2. This mandate is confirmed explicitly and precisely in the Letter of James, where he recommends: "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" (5:14-15). Therefore, it is a practice that was already in act at the time of the Apostles. Jesus, in fact, taught his disciples to have the same predilection for the sick and suffering, and he transmitted to them the capacity and the task to continue to give freely, in his name and according to his heart, relief and peace through the special grace of this Sacrament. This, however, **must not make us fall into the obsessive search of a miracle** or into the presumption of being able to obtain healing always and in every case. **But it is the assurance of the closeness of Jesus to the sick and also the elderly,** because **every elderly person, every person over the age of 65, can receive this Sacrament,** through which Jesus Himself brings us closer.

But when there is a sick person, sometimes we think: "let us call the priest so he will come"; "No, then he'll bring bad luck, don't call him", or perhaps "then the sick person will be frightened." Why does one think this? Because there is a bit this idea that after the priest comes the funeral home. And this isn't true. The priest comes to help the sick or the elderly; for this it is so important the visit of the priests to the sick. You need to call the priest and say: "Come, give the anointing, bless him." **It is Jesus Himself who comes** to relieve the sick, to give them strength, to give them hope, to help, even to forgive them their sins. And this is beautiful! **And it is unnecessary to think that this is taboo,** because it is always beautiful to know that **in the moment of pain and sickness that we are not alone:** the priest and those who are present during the Anointing of the Sick represent the whole Christian community that, like one body clings around those who suffer and their relatives,

nourishing faith and hope in them, and sustaining them with prayer and fraternal warmth. But the greatest comfort derives from the fact that is **the Lord Jesus Himself who is present in the Sacrament, who takes us by the hand**, He caresses us as he did with the sick and reminds us that now we belong to him and that nothing - not even evil or death - can separate us from Him. Let us have this habit of calling the priest so that our sick - and I'm not speaking of those sick with the flu for three or four days, but those with a serious sickness - and also our elderly, so that he may come and give them this Sacrament, this comfort, this strength of Jesus to go forward. Let us do this!

WHY CELEBRATE THIS SACRAMENT?

Those who are seriously ill need the special help of God's grace in this time of anxiety, lest they be broken in spirit and, under the pressure of temptation, perhaps weakened in their faith (*Pastoral Care of the Sick*). Jesus instituted the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick (see James 5:14-15 and Mark 6:13) so that he could "come close" to the seriously ill and elderly with his healing and strength.

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

When possible, the elderly/gravely ill person avails themselves of the Sacrament of Reconciliation before being anointed especially when conscious of grave sin.

WHO CAN RECEIVE?

[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 [beginning at age 65], the fitting time for him to receive this sacrament has certainly already arrived."* Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) 1514

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF THE CELEBRATION OF THIS SACRAMENT?

Gives strength, peace and courage: *"to overcome the difficulties that go with the condition of serious illness or the frailty of old age.....[with the] assistance from the Lord....meant to lead the sick person to healing of the soul, but also of the body if such is God's will. Furthermore, 'if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.'"* CCC 1520

Unites us with the passion of Christ: we receive strength to unite our sufferings to the passion of Christ for the salvation of the world. CCC 1521

Provides a preparation for the final journey: For those at the end of this life it *completes our conformity to the death and Resurrection of Christ, just as Baptism began it.....it fortifies the end of our earthly life like a solid rampart for the final struggles before entering the Father's house.* CCC 1523 .

THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

1. Laying on of hands—In silence the priest lays his hands on the head of each person to be anointed. (Jesus would heal people by touching them--Mark 7:32-36; Mark 8:23).
2. Anointing with oil—The priest anoints the forehead and the palms of the hands of each person. While anointing the forehead he says: *Through this holy anointing may the Lord in his love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit.* While anointing the hands he says: *May the Lord who frees you from sins save you and raise you up.* Jesus used material elements such as mud, and oil to heal people (Mark 6:13 and 7:32-36).

THE SACRAMENT OF ANOINTING will be given at all Masses at both Ascension and St. Bernard's on the weekend of October 21 and 22. The homily will be brief to accommodate the anointing. People who are experiencing an illness that can be life-threatening or who are age 65 or over are encouraged to come. Please sit at the ends of the pew, and Fr. Gregory will come to you for the anointing. There will also be treats and refreshments after the Masses.

Questions? - Please call homebound coordinators,

Barb Knorr at 952-466-2447 (St. Bernard's) or Rita Fahey (Ascension) at 952-467-6478.