

RCIA HO class 29 – The Sacrament of Anointing

The Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick (*Unctio Infirmorum*) is perhaps one of the least well understood of the seven sacraments of the Church, probably because it is also the least familiar to most of the faithful. It is by means of this sacrament that the Church commends any one of faithful who is dangerously ill to the suffering and glorified Lord so that He may support and save them. Therefore, it is not a sacrament only for those who are at the point of death, but also for those who begin to be in danger of death from sickness or old age. At the same time the sacrament is not primarily intended to bring about physical healing, although this may occur, but to unite the sick person more closely to the Passion of Christ.

The *matter* of the sacrament is the anointing of the forehead and the palms of the hands with oil (*oleo infirmorum*) blessed by the Bishop at the Chrism Mass on Holy Thursday.

The *form* of the sacrament is the words “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 (+).”

The first grace of the sacrament is one of strengthening, peace, and courage to overcome the difficulties that come with serious illness or old age. The grace of the sacrament also brings about the forgiveness of sins. Whenever possible the administration of the Sacrament includes Sacramental Confession. But in the case of an unconscious person unable to confess his sins, they can be forgiven through Anointing presuming that the person would have desired to confess and receive sacramental absolution had he been able. Physical healing can also be an effect of Anointing. Whether or not physical healing occurs is a mystery, but it is connected to how, in God’s providence, this effect would lead to the salvation of the healed person and to the salvation of those around him.

The most important meaning and effect of the Sacrament of Anointing is the uniting of the sick person to the Passion (suffering) of Christ for his own good and the good of the whole Church. In a certain way, the recipient of this sacrament is “consecrated” to share in the redemptive work of Christ by uniting his own sufferings to those of Christ and offering that suffering along with Christ’s for the continuation of His saving work in the world. While the sick person’s suffering may not be noticeably eased by the sacrament, his suffering does take on both a positive meaning, and a real redemptive value. “By celebrating this sacrament, the Church, in the Communion of Saints, intercedes for the benefit of the sick person, and he... contributes to the sanctification of the Church and to the good of all men for whom the Church suffers and offers Herself through Christ to God the Father.”

(Sources: Code of Canon Law #998-1007; CCC #1500-1532; Haffner, The Sacramental Mystery).

RCIA WKSH Class 29
Anointing and Funerals

- 1) Give three different names for the Sacrament of Anointing.
- 2) Who administers the Sacrament of Anointing?
- 3) What other sacrament normally accompanies the Sacrament of Anointing?
- 4) If a person is unconscious, can he still be anointed?
- 5) What are the two purposes of the Sacrament of Anointing?
- 6) When is the proper time to call the priest to anoint someone?
- 7) Why should a Funeral Mass be offered for a Catholic who has died? (two reasons)
- 8) Is cremation acceptable from a Catholic point of view?
- 9) What should be done with the ashes after a body has been cremated?
- 10) What should NOT be done with the ashes after a body has been cremated.
- 11) The Sunday Mass is always about one person. Who is that person?
- 12) The Funeral Mass is always about one person. Who is that person?
- 13) Is the Funeral Mass supposed to be a celebration of the deceased person's life?