



## Sacraments 31/35: Introduction to the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick

In each Sacrament, there is a natural meaning that is made supernatural. In the Anointing of the Sick, we have both the visiting and caring for the sick person, as well as the oil used in the ritual. There is a natural response to the illnesses of those we love to care for them. Our simple visit and giving them medicine can gain a supernatural meaning with the Sacrament by calling upon the grace of God to help them in this time of illness. The oil used can find meaning in the ancient practice of oiling up athletes up before the Olympics or other sporting events. It limbers up the muscles and prepares you for battle. The supernatural meaning is to prepare the body, mind, and soul, for the battle with the disease, as well as the acceptance of death. It is a true contest of wills to accept our sin, ask for forgiveness, and prepare ourselves to meet our savior.

The Bible is full of miracles of Jesus healing the sick:

- Simon's mother-in-law lay sick with a fever. They immediately told him about her. He approached, grasped her hand, and helped her up. Then the fever left her and she waited on them. (Mark 1:30-31)
- A leper came to him and kneeling down begged him and said, "If you wish, you can make me clean." Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand, touched him, and said to him, "I do will it. Be made clean." The leprosy left him immediately, and he was made clean. Then, warning him sternly, he dismissed him at once. Then he said to him, "See that you tell no one anything, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses prescribed; that will be proof for them." (Mark 1:40-43)
- As he passed by he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither he nor his parents sinned; it is so that the works of God might be made visible through him. We have to do the works of the one who sent me while it is day. Night is coming when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva, and smeared the clay on his eyes, and said to him, "Go wash in the Pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed, and came back able to see. (John 9:1-7)

The main Scripture at the heart of the Anointing of the Sick:

- 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, and the prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up. If he has committed any sins, he will be forgiven. (James 5:14-15)

When to receive it? You should receive the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick as soon as you are diagnosed with an illness that could lead to death. Do not wait until the moment of death. The Sacrament is a help from God for the duration of the illness, not just the end. I normally anoint before surgery as well.

-Fr. Kopp

Next Week: Essentials of the Rite of the Anointing of the Sick