



What's What

A weekly communication that provides an opportunity for our faith community to grow together in faith.

Issue 64 February 15, 2009

Anointing of the Sick

We carry Christ's healing ministry into our world today in many different ways—families tend for sick relatives, many religious orders have established Catholic hospitals and hospices, and people visit shrines in search of physical cures. Above all, though, we continue Christ's healing ministry through the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. In the book of James from the Bible, James tells us: *Is anyone among you sick? He should summon the presbyters [priests] 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

The Rite of Anointing says that there is no need to wait until someone is at the point of death to receive the Sacrament, only that the serious

nature of the illness is established. In addition, anyone over the age of 65 may also be anointed, even if there is not an immediate danger. Any baptized Catholic can receive this Sacrament.

Through Anointing, the grace of God encourages, supports, and enlivens people to endure whatever cross they might have. While it may be that physical healing does not occur, the person's spiritual strength will grow, and it will help the person against despair.

Bishops and priests are the ordinary ministers of the sacrament of the Anointing. While deacons share in Holy Orders, they do not have the power to forgive sins in the sacrament of Penance. The intention is that the sacrament of Penance be included in any celebration of the sacrament of Anointing.

Therefore it is only bishops and priests that administer this sacrament.

During the Rite, there may be a Scripture reading, followed by

a penitential rite. Then the priest lays his hands on the head of the sick person and proceeds to anoint the forehead and hands (or other parts of the body) with the blessed Oil of the Sick. While anointing he says 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" (CCC 1513).

When a person is close to dying the priest offers the person Penance, Anointing of the Sick, and the Eucharist as *Viaticum* (food for the journey). These are "the sacraments that prepare for our heavenly homeland" (CCC1525). The special words proper to *Viaticum* are added: "May the Lord Jesus protect you and lead you to everlasting life. Amen."

We are united with the Passion of Christ as a result of this sacrament. By uniting ourselves more closely with the sufferings of Christ, we receive the grace of sharing in the saving work of Christ. In this way, our suffering, joined with Christ's suffering on the Cross, builds up the People of God.

The Sacrament also prepares us for our final journey when we leave this life. The Anointing of the Sic completes our identification with Jesus Christ that was begun at our Baptism. Its grace and power give us

Reflection Questions

- How would you describe your reaction to illnesses you have had? How have you been moved to pray and seek the spiritual resources of the Church?
- If you have been present at the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick, what were your impressions?
- Do you encourage those who are ill or elderly to receive this sacrament?
- When you are sick, how easy is it for you to accept God's will?

strength in our final struggles before we die.

Often parishes offer Anointing at the end of a special Mass. This can serve the purpose of the sacrament and at the same time build up the faith of the community itself. In illness, we should never have to stand alone and these celebrations remind us that we don't.

St Paul uses the analogy of the Church as the mystical body of Christ. Christ is the head and we the baptized are the body. When one of the members of the body is sick, the whole body is sick. That is why we need to make sure that the elderly and infirmed among us are taken care of, physically as well as spiritually.

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, the fitting time to receive this sacrament has certainly already arrived." - CCC 1514



Saint of the Day: St. Gilbert of Sempringham (1083-1189)

Monday, February 16, the Church remembers St Gilbert of Sempringham.

Gilbert was born in Sempringham, England, into a wealthy family, but he followed a path quite different from that expected of him as the son of a Norman knight. Sent to France for his higher education, he decided to pursue seminary studies.

He returned to England not yet ordained a priest, and inherited several estates from his father. But Gilbert avoided the easy life he could have led under the circumstances. Instead he lived a simple life at a parish, sharing as much as possible with the poor. Following his ordination to the priesthood he served as parish priest at Sempringham.

Among the congregation were seven young women who had expressed to him their desire to live in religious life. In response, Gilbert had a house built for

them adjacent to the Church. There they lived an austere life, but one which attracted ever more numbers; eventually lay sisters and lay brothers were added to work the land. The religious order formed eventually became known as the Gilbertines, though Gilbert had hoped the Cistercians or some other existing order would take on the responsibility of establishing a rule of life for the new order. The Gilbertines, the only religious order of English origin founded during the Middle Ages, continued to thrive. But the order came to an end when King Henry VIII suppressed all Catholic monasteries.

Over the years a special custom grew up in the houses of the order called "the plate of the Lord Jesus." The best portions of the dinner were put on a special plate and shared with the poor, reflecting Gilbert's lifelong concern for less fortunate people.

Throughout his life Gilbert lived simply, consumed little food and spent a good portion of many nights in prayer. Despite the rigors of such a life he died at well over age 100.

Comment:

When he came into his father's wealth, Gilbert could have lived a life of luxury, as many of his fellow priests did at the time. Instead, he chose to share his wealth with the poor. The charming habit of filling "the plate of the Lord Jesus" in the monasteries he established reflected his concern. Today's Operation Rice Bowl echoes that habit: eating a simpler meal and letting the difference in the grocery bill help feed the hungry.

From www.americancatholic.org/Features/SaintOfDay/



FROM THE CATECHISM

When should we receive the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick?

The proper time for receiving this holy anointing has certainly arrived when the believer begins to be in danger of death because of illness or old age. 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 (CCC 1530)

Who are the ministers of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick?

Only priests... and bishops can give the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, using oil blessed by the bishop, or if necessary by the celebrating presbyter [priest or celebrant] himself. (CCC 1530)

What are the effects of the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick? The special grace of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick has as its effects:

- the uniting of the sick person to the passion of Christ, for his own good and that of the whole Church;
- [giving the sick person the strength], peace, and courage to endure in a Christian manner the sufferings of illness or old age;
- [imparting] the forgiveness of sins, if the sick person was not able to obtain it through the sacrament of Penance;
- [providing for] the restoration of health, if it is conducive to the salvation of his soul;
- [helping the sick person in] the preparation for passing over to eternal life. (CCC 1532)

“What’s What” is a publication of the Youth Ministry Department of St Mary, Canandaigua, and St Bridget, Bloomfield.

Our Youth Ministry Mission Statement:

Building on the mission of our parishes to follow the way of Christ in our thoughts, words, and deeds, and to make Christ more fully present in all who live within our community, the Youth Ministry mission is to empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in the world today; to affirm the gifts of our youth and provide opportunities for young people to share their gifts with the larger community; and to meet the religious, spiritual and social needs of all youth with the committed leadership, guidance and support of our parish family, providing an opportunity for our entire faith community to grow together in Christian faith.