



# ANOINTING OF THE SICK

LITURGY BYTES *by Michele Hall*



After writing about the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes last week and mentioning how this day is also known as World Day of the Sick, I thought our next reflection should focus on a misunderstood sacrament which has gone through changes over the years. Today it is under the category of a Sacrament of Healing and is known as the Anointing of the Sick.

Some folks might recall the name *Extreme Unction* which was also referred to as the Last Rites. It was used when a person was in danger of death. Fortunately, with the 2nd Vatican Council revamping how we celebrate sacraments, adding a reference to healing done by Jesus, a refreshing look and understanding was given to Extreme Unction. The sacrament was given a new understanding so people could receive it when they had an illness, an upcoming surgery or advanced age. No longer is this something that is feared and used only at the last minute. Today, it is more commonly known as the Sacrament of the Sick.

In the Scriptures, we see numerous stories of Jesus healing people. Jesus healed the blind, the deaf, the paralyzed and those affected by long-term illnesses such as leprosy and hemorrhage. Jesus healed people regardless of their status in the community: lepers were social outcasts; the centurion, who requested healing for his servant, was a Gentile; and women were healed without regard to their connection to a male in the community. We also know that Jesus healed those who appeared to be his enemies. We also note the use of oil in Mark's Gospel with the casting out of demons and the curing of those who were sick. In the letter of James, we read that the presbyters should be summoned for the sick, and they should pray over the sick and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. So, we learn from the Church historians that the use of oil continued as a practice as the Church grew.

This beautiful sacrament is available to us once a month after the 9:30 Mass or by appointment. It is a beautiful and prayerful experience for those who receive it, and the best part is, you can receive it more than once!

*Have a blessed, prayerful, and healthy week ahead!*