

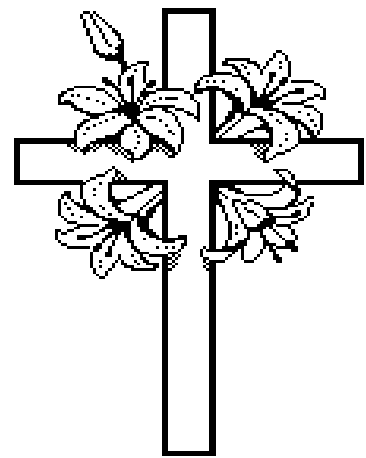
"Communal Celebration of the Anointing of the Sick"

The following material draws upon and presumes the use of the *Rite of Anointing within Mass* found in the ritual book "*Pastoral Care of the Sick*" p. 103 ff.

The content deals with some practical considerations ahead of the liturgy and then walks through the liturgy itself highlighting practical details and suggestions. Those preparing the liturgy will no doubt have their own ideas to add to it.

PARISH PREPARATION FOR THIS CELEBRATION

The celebration of the sacrament of anointing during a Sunday or weekday liturgy is a rare event in parish life. For this reason, such a celebration demands good preparation on a number of levels. On one level the people themselves need to be prepared for it ahead of time. At another level the celebration itself needs to be prepared so that it can be richly celebrated.



A) PREPARING THE PARISH

A fundamental question to be asked and explored with parishioners is: *Who are the appropriate recipients of the sacrament of anointing?* This question can be explored during a Mass previous to the celebration, through the Sunday Bulletin or both. Some of the following might also be drawn upon for the homily of the day.

We are told in the Introduction to the Rite of Anointing of the Sick that the sacrament of anointing is the proper sacrament for those Christians whose health is *seriously impaired* by sickness or old age." (par 97) In practice, this instruction should encourage us to avoid two misinterpretations of the sacrament.

The first is the misinterpretation that this sacrament is a sacrament for the dying and that it should be delayed to as close to death as possible. The second is the misinterpretation that this sacrament is appropriate once I have reached old age or if I have a permanent physical, emotional or mental disability. In instructing about the appropriate use of this sacrament we need to focus on the phrase "whose health is seriously impaired" – old age or disability do not, on their own, necessarily equate with serious impairment of health.

It is also helpful to remind people that this is a repeatable sacrament, even within the experience of one illness, when a person's condition may deteriorate. Also, within some long term medical conditions (for example, alcoholism, mental illness) there can be acute phases when an anointing can be beneficial to the individual.

The appropriateness of celebrating this sacrament in the context of the community might also be shared. Again in the Introduction to the Rite we are told: "Through the sacrament of anointing, the Church 1) supports the sick in their struggle against illness and 2) continues Christ's messianic work of healing...The sacrament of anointing effectively expresses the share that each one has in the suffering of others." (Par 98) Again this reminds us that as Church, as members of the Body of Christ, each of us is called to share in the healing work of Christ.

B) Preparing the Celebration

If time permits, this celebration will be greatly enhanced by gathering a group of people from the parish to help in its preparation. Ideally these people will come from a liturgy group, music group and, of vital importance, carers of the sick. This group, working with the presiding priest and any assistants that will be present at the celebration, should have access to the ritual "Rite of Anointing within Mass".

Hospitality & Set Up:

Our actions of welcome today will of necessity need to begin before people arrive at the Church building itself. Are there members of our community that will need transport to and from Church? When people arrive will there be an inviting space for them? If needed, is there room and access for wheelchairs? How will we set a tone of hospitality and welcome to today's celebration? How will we continue this tone through the liturgy?

One way of expressing welcome is to actively invite people to participate in the celebration. This is a fundamental aspect of liturgy – the liturgy is our prayer, we are called to participate. Again in the Rite we read, "...the full participation of those present must be fostered by every means, especially through the use of appropriate songs, so that the celebration manifests the Easter joy which is proper to this sacrament. (Par 108)

The environment of the church will itself communicate a message of welcome or otherwise. Is it bright, clean, and warm? In Easter confidence, do we have visible signs of life and hope in the church space, i.e. flowers, plants, water etc?

Another action of hospitality is ensuring that people know what they should be doing during the liturgy and what posture they should be

adopting. When we change even the smallest of things in the liturgy, people tend to lose their bearings and need more guidance than usual about postures that they are typically very familiar with, for example, standing for the prayer of faith in this celebration. They especially need guidance for postures in the unique aspects of this liturgy, for example, to remain seated during the anointing. When you have completed your preparation of this liturgy it might be very worthwhile to review the liturgy in terms of what guidance people will need in the course of the liturgy and what form this guidance will take.

Tools for the Liturgy

Consider the variety of books and vessels that will be needed for the celebration of this liturgy. Will the ritual book for the Pastoral Care of the Sick be used? Or will the texts from this ritual book be incorporated into a leader's book in a suitable folder for use during the liturgy?

What is the quality of vessels for containing the oil of the sick? How visible will the oil be to the congregation? Where will these oils be displayed during the liturgy?



A note on taking up the Collection

When celebrating an occasional liturgy such as this it is wise to look at some of the practical implications on the habitual elements of the liturgy. For example, if this anointing is taking place during a Sunday Mass, collectors and/or the assembly may need to be informed as to when the collection will be taken up at this liturgy. A collection should not take place during the liturgy of anointing itself but should take place at the normal time – during the gathering of the gifts and preparation of the altar. In the case of there being two collections, an option might be to take the first collection up at the end of the homily before introducing the liturgy of anointing.

Music Ministers

Music ministers can play an enormous role in enhancing the celebration of this liturgy. Ideally those leading the music will be involved in preparing this celebration. If this is not the case the preparation group should ensure that a discussion with the music ministers about the music requirements/suggestions for this liturgy takes place at the earliest opportunity. Opportunities for music are highlighted in the following notes while a list of suitable music can be found at the end of this resource.

Gathering Rite:

After the **gathering song**, which hopefully the congregation will know and sing, and **Greeting**, there are **words of welcome** for the sick offered in the Rite (page 105) that can be adapted to the circumstances.

These words of welcome may be followed by a **Sprinkling rite** – a reminder of the life giving spirit received in baptism. If used, this rite should be generous in its proportions! Music ministers might be asked to musically accompany this sprinkling.

These or other words could introduce it: *“Let this water call to mind our baptism into Christ, who by his death and resurrection has saved us.”*

An alternative suggestion to this is the following **penitential rite**:

Lord Jesus, you are healer of all our ills. Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you are the great physician who brings us peace. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you bring courage to those who suffer. Lord, have mercy.

Again, there are two **opening prayers** (page 106) to choose from in the Rite, which are permissible to use on a weekday Mass or at a Sunday Eucharist in Ordinary Time.

Liturgy of the Word:

When the ritual Mass for the Anointing of the Sick is celebrated the readings are taken from the *Lectionary Vol III*, pp. 203-253, from Part III of *Pastoral Care of the Sick* or from the readings of the day, unless those involved with the priest in preparing the liturgy choose other readings from Scripture.

There is great witness value in having more than one minister proclaim these readings. Ideally at least two lectors, a cantor and a deacon/priest will minister to the assembly in the liturgy of the word.

The **Homily** is an opportunity to show how the readings speak of the meaning of illness in Christian terms and also of the grace given by the sacrament of anointing. It is also an opportunity to remind those who gather of the baptismal call for all of us to be ministers of Christ’s healing in the everyday circumstances of our lives.

The end of the homily should introduce and lead into the next element of the liturgy – the liturgy of anointing. (This might be preceded by the first collection – see above note).

Liturgy of Anointing:

Yet again from the introduction to the rite we are told, "...there are three distinct and integral aspects to the celebration of this sacrament: *the prayer of faith, the laying on of hands and the anointing with oil.*" (par 104) These three elements serve as our foci.

The prayer of faith (page 107) takes the form of a litany and replaces the Prayer of the Faithful on this day. A lector or other member of the community may suitably lead them. In light of the celebration, the preparation group might invite a care giver/nurse/doctor/member of parish care group to lead this litany of prayer – giving them the opportunity to rehearse at a microphone ahead of time.

Music ministers can help enhance these prayers by leading the people in a sung response to them (for example, Lord have mercy) while also maintaining instrumental music underneath the spoken prayers.

The Laying on of Hands follows these prayers. It is at this point that the sick are invited to come forward, around the sanctuary area. (The group might decide on an alternative location to which those seeking anointing come, in light of the shape of the Church, space and the people who will be anointed, i.e. the aisles or some other location.)

The laying on of hands is an action of the presiding priest, assisted by other ordained ministers present. However, a further visible sign of the community's solidarity with and support of the sick can also be expressed. Carers and members of the community can be invited to assist the sick to come forward. They can also be invited to remain and show their support by placing a hand on the shoulder of the sick – akin to the support shown by a sponsor to a confirmation candidate.

After the laying on of hands the sick and those who are supporting them remain in place as they have yet to be anointed. The temptation to collapse these two separate actions (laying on of hands and anointed) into one should be avoided.

During the laying on of hands, the music ministers play an important role in supporting the ritual action. Throughout this time they hopefully will be leading the congregation in suitable hymns of solidarity and faith.

Before the **anointing** takes place the presiding priest leads the community in a prayer of thanksgiving, which is provided in the Rite itself (page 108).

The presiding priest, together with any assistants, then anoints the sick on the forehead and the hands, using the sacramental form (i.e. words). While the anointings continue, music ministers again accompany the ritual action with music. They need to be clearly instructed so that the community can hear the words of anointing used by the presider for the first person. Only after these words are first heard should the music ministers begin.

As people are anointed they return to their places. After the anointings the people are invited to kneel or stand and the presider leads the assembly in either **prayer A or B** offered in the Rite (page 111).

It is presumed that the oil used today will have already been blessed at the Chrism mass. If extra oil is needed it is permissible to add olive oil to the already blessed oil.

As a symbol of the Church we are called to allow this symbol to speak as loudly as possible to the gathered community. This reminder is given in the Rite in Par 107 where we find "...If the anointing is to be an effective sacramental symbol, there should be a generous use of oil so that it will be seen and felt by the sick person as a sign of the Spirit's healing and strengthening presence. For the same reason, it is not desirable to wipe off the oil after anointing."

Liturgy of the Eucharist:

The Mass continues with the **preparation of the altar**. Again the preparation group might consider who will take part in this. As a reminder of our Easter faith in the resurrection, we might add a festive note to this simple action by placing a large white cloth on the altar at this stage, together with the corporal and an arrangement of flowers at the foot of the altar.

The use of large hosts, like those provided from Glencairn, further highlights the nature of our Christian community as one body. As the one body is broken down in order to make each of us whole, likewise the broken in our community have hope of wholeness through Christ.

In the Rite of Anointing we find options for the **Prayer over the Gifts** (page 113) as well as a **preface** (page 114) for use in this celebration. There are also embolisms offered for use with Prayers I, II and III.

If you are using music ministers at today's liturgy, hopefully they will choose to lead the acclamations of the Eucharistic prayer.

Communion Rite:

Both the fraction rite and the invitation to communion stand out as proclamations of faith in the healing power of the Body of Christ.

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion need to be sensitive to the ability of the sick to join in the **communion procession**. Those who can, and those who wish to, should not be prevented from doing so by our good intentions!

The Rite provides us with a choice of **prayers after communion** (page 116). This might be a day to consider sending communion ministers from the assembly to bring communion to those who cannot join the community for Mass due to illness or confinement. This action would serve as a witness to another form of support for the sick in our Church.

Rite of Dismissal:

A choice of **blessings** (page 117) for all present is offered in the Rite. The dismissal sends us forth as a people of faith and commends the sick to our care – reminding us of our call to minister within and beyond the liturgy.

▣ Some Music Suggestions ▣

Psalms: *(As well as during the liturgy of the word, psalms can suitably be sung during the opening procession, the anointing, the preparation of the altar and during communion time.)*

Psalm 25 – To you O Lord (In Caelo/Gather)

Psalm 23

Psalm 16 – Gather #19

Psalm 34 – God will heal the broken heart, Liam Lawton (In Caelo)

Psalm 91 – Be with me Lord, Marty Haugen (In Caelo/ Gather #50)

Isaiah 12 – With joy you shall draw water, Marty Haugen (Gather #81)

The Cloud's Veil – Liam Lawton (In Caelo/Gather)

Servant Song –Richard Gillard

Be Not Afraid – Bob Dufford (InCaelo/ Gather)

On Eagle's Wings – Michael Joncas (In Caelo/Gather)

Take and Eat – Michael Joncas & James Quinn (In Caelo/ Gather)

Healer of My Soul – Liam Lawton (In Caelo)

Healer of our every ill - Marty Haugen (Gather #854)

Eye has not seen – Marty Haugen (Gather)

Lord of all Hopefulness – text Jan Struther (In Caelo/ Gather)

Only in God – John Foley (Gather)

On Eagle's Wings – Michael Joncas (In Caelo/ Gather)

There is a balm in Gilead - Gather

If there is a sprinkling rite, David Haas' "Water of Life" works very well, as does "Springs of Water" by Marty Haugen (Gather #155). Music ministers may already have a tradition of using a particular piece of music for this liturgical action.