



LESSON TWENTY-ONE

The Anointing of the Sick: Christ Accompanies Us in Our Weakness

Opening Prayer

*“O God, only support of our human weakness,
show the power of your protection
over your servants who are sick,
that, sustained by your merciful help,
they may be restored to your holy Church in good health.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.”¹*



1. From the Prayer After Communion for the Mass “For the Sick,” Masses and Prayers for Various Needs and Occasions, *The Roman Missal*, p. 1315.

Lesson Objectives:

- ❖ Understand the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, its biblical foundations, its institution by Christ, and the proper circumstances for receiving this sacrament.
- ❖ Recognize suffering as an integral part of human life and its redemptive value when it's viewed through the lens of the Cross.
- ❖ Identify the effects of the Sacrament of Anointing and understand the relationship between Anointing, Viaticum, and the Church's accompaniment of the dying.

BURNING QUESTIONS

- ❖ Why do we need a sacrament specifically for suffering and illness when we can just pray for healing?

What do you think we need spiritually when we are suffering? What do you think the difference is between praying for healing and receiving a Sacrament of Healing?

- ❖ When someone is near death, they receive the Anointing of the Sick with Reconciliation and the Eucharist. Aren't the sacraments supposed to help us in life?

What does this say about the nature of death?

Blessed Chiara Badano

Feast Day: October 29

Lived: October 29, 1971–October 7, 1990 · Sassello, Italy · Patron of Youth, Athletes, Cancer patients

A teenage athlete and Focolare member from Italy, Chiara Badano was diagnosed with aggressive bone cancer at seventeen. As the disease spread and treatments failed, she refused morphine to offer her suffering to Jesus. Her hospital room became a place of light; visitors left transformed and comforted. “I have nothing left,” she said, “but I still have my heart, and with that I can always love.” Shortly before her death, she asked her mother to help her prepare for her “wedding,” by which she meant her funeral—she chose white garments and the songs to be sung. She died at nineteen. Pope Benedict XVI beatified her in 2010, calling her a witness to the redemptive power of suffering.



“It’s for you, Jesus. If you want it, I want it too.”

Blessed Chiara Badano

Jesus Accompanies Us in Suffering

God Entered Our Pain

Suffering came into the world through the Fall, but it does not have the final word. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, took our pain upon himself. By his Passion he transformed suffering from within. The *Catechism* teaches: “By his passion and death on the cross Christ has given a new meaning to suffering: it can henceforth configure us to him and unite us with his redemptive Passion” (CCC 1505).

Christ's Healing Ministry

In his earthly ministry, Jesus healed lepers, the blind, the paralyzed, those tormented by demons, and raised the dead. He never turned away those in pain. He also gave his healing mission to his apostles (see Mark 6:12–13) and commanded them to anoint the sick—a practice the early Church continued and the letter of James explicitly records.



“I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body.”

Colossians 1:24

What the Sacrament Is and Does

Not Only for the Dying

A persistent misunderstanding is that this sacrament is only for those about to die. The *Catechism* is clear: “As soon as anyone of the faithful begins to be in danger of death from sickness or old age, the fitting time for them to receive this sacrament has certainly already arrived” (CCC 1514, quoting *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 73). Those preparing for major surgery, facing serious or chronic illness, or experiencing the frailty of old age may all receive it.

The Effects of Anointing

The *Catechism* names the effects of Anointing of the Sick (see CCC 1532): union of the sick person with Christ’s Passion; strengthening, peace, and courage to endure suffering; forgiveness of sins; restoration of health if it is conducive to salvation; and preparation for the final journey. No one faces serious illness or death alone; Christ and the whole Church are spiritually present.



“Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.”

James 5:14

The Rite and the Church's Accompaniment

The Rite

The priest anoints the forehead and hands of the sick person with the Oil of the Sick—blessed by the bishop at the Chrism Mass during Holy Week—while praying the sacramental formula. The rite is simple but profound: matter (the oil) and form (the words) unite to channel God's grace directly to the person who suffers.

Viaticum: Food for the Journey

When death approaches, the Church accompanies the dying with the “last rites”: Reconciliation (if the person is able), Anointing, and Viaticum—the Eucharist received as “food for the journey.” This final reception of Christ’s Body and Blood is the completion of the sacramental life, a pledge of resurrection, and the Church’s most intimate act of accompaniment for those crossing the threshold from this life to the next.



“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.”

Psalm 23:4



Discussion Questions

- ❖ How does the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick help us understand the Catholic view of suffering? How does it differ from the world's perspective? In what ways could this sacrament transform our experience of illness or pain into something meaningful?
- ❖ How does knowing that the entire Church community is spiritually present with the sick person change our understanding of what happens in this sacrament?
- ❖ How do we reconcile our hopes for physical healing with acceptance of God's will? What does it mean to trust in God's presence and grace through this sacrament, even when the outcome may not be what we desire?

Faith and Fun

Which saint famously said, “Suffering is a great grace; through suffering the soul becomes like the Savior”?

a. St. Francis of Assisi

b. St. Thérèse of Lisieux

c. St. Faustina Kowalska

d. St. John Paul II

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St. Faustina, known for her devotion to Divine Mercy, embraced her physical and spiritual suffering as a way to unite herself with Christ.

Oil of the Sick

What It Is

In every Catholic church, a small container labeled “OI” holds *oleum infirmorum*, which means the “Oil of the Sick.” This is pure olive oil blessed by the bishop at the Chrism Mass during Holy Week, along with the Oil of Catechumens (OC) and Sacred Chrism (SC). Once blessed, these oils are distributed to every parish and used throughout the year in the celebration of the sacraments.

How It Is Used

When a priest celebrates the Anointing of the Sick, he anoints the person’s forehead and hands with the Oil of the Sick, making the Sign of the Cross, while praying the words of the sacrament. In the Anointing of the Sick, this oil becomes the sign of Christ’s healing presence, set apart and made holy for those who suffer.



Living It Out:

Think of someone you know who is seriously ill, suffering emotionally, or carrying a heavy burden. This week, commit to praying for them each day. Ask Jesus to draw near to them with peace, healing, and hope.

Closing Prayer

*Lord Jesus, you came into the world to heal our infirmities and endure our sufferings.
You went about healing all and bringing comfort to those in pain and need.
In your mercy, be present to your servants who suffer.
May they be restored to health in mind and body,
and may they give you thanks with
renewed strength and hope.
May they always trust in your loving providence,
and even in weakness find strength in you.*

Amen.

Announcements / Reminders — add notes here