

# Father Anthony's Corner

*"He humbled himself" ~Philippians 2:8*

## *Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick*



### **My dear family of Christ in Peña Blanca and its missions,**

I would like to reflect briefly on one of the Seven Sacraments: the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. It is one of two Sacraments of healing, the other being the Sacrament of Reconciliation, also known as the Sacrament of Penance or Confession.

The anointing of the sick allows the Church, through its ministers, the bishops, and the priests, to bring God's compassion to man and woman. In the past, this sacrament was called "Extreme Unction" because it was understood as a spiritual comfort in the face of imminent death. Today, the Church calls it the "Anointing of the Sick" because it helps us broaden our vision to include the experience of illness and suffering within the horizon of God's mercy.

The parable of the "Good Samaritan" (*Luke 10:30-35*) expresses in all its depths the mystery that shines through this Sacrament. The evangelist Luke tells us that the Good Samaritan attends to the wounded man by pouring oil and wine on his wounds.

The oil reminds us of that which is blessed annually at the Chrism Mass by the diocesan bishop in view of the Anointing of the Sick. Wine, on the other hand, is a sign of the love and grace of Christ which flow from the gift of his life for us and are fully expressed in the sacramental life of the Church.

The suffering person is entrusted to an innkeeper, the evangelist Luke concludes, so that the innkeeper may continue to care for him, sparing no expense. Now, who is this innkeeper? The Christian community!

Every day, the Lord continues to entrust people who are in physical and spiritual suffering to the Church, as well as those who are advanced in age, to the Church, the Christian community. This is to allow us to lavish all of God's love, compassion, mercy, and care on them.

James highlights the effects of this Sacrament when he recommends: "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; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven" (*5:14-15*). Other effects of this Sacrament include union with the passion of Christ, ecclesial grace, and preparation for the final journey (*Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1520-1523*).

So, when someone is sick, we should call the priest. He will not frighten the sick person to death, as some people used to assume, including many who erroneously called this Sacrament the "last rite." Instead, the priest will assist the sick or elderly.

We ought to call the priest to the sick person's side and say: "Come, give him the anointing, bless him." Through his minister, the priest, Jesus comes to comfort the sick person, to offer him strength, hope and assistance, as well as to forgive his sins.

Furthermore, the Anointing of the Sick completes our conformity to the death and resurrection of Christ, just as Baptism began it. It completes the holy anointings that mark the whole Christian life: that of Baptism which sealed the new life in us, and that of Confirmation which strengthened us for the combat of life. The last anointing fortifies the end of earthly life like a solid rampart for the final struggles before entering the Father's house. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church, Section IV*)

Beginning June 4, 2022, after the 5:30pm Mass, I will begin administering this Holy Sacrament to our parishioners who are sick elderly, disabled, and those who wish to receive this Sacrament. Please spread the word, and help us to bring those who are in need of this Sacrament.

*Our Lady of Guadalupe and the Health of the Sick, pray for us.*

**Fr. Anthony O. Ezeaputa, Pastor**