

# Christ's Gift of Healing in the Anointing of the Sick

Greetings!

As children, many of us were asked to memorize the seven sacraments. Some are very familiar to us—perhaps we've been invited to attend the baptism of a friend's baby or a colleague's wedding, and we receive reconciliation and Eucharist regularly. For many, the sacrament of the anointing of the sick is not a part of our day-to-day experience.

Given the lack of experience with this sacrament, we may struggle to talk about it with the children in our life. When my daughter was in preschool, she and I rushed my mom to the hospital during a medical emergency. Our associate pastor came to anoint my mom, and my daughter was very curious about what was happening. I told her that our priest-friend was asking God to help Nana feel better in her body and in her heart. It was probably a sufficient answer, but I remember wishing I had a better way to talk about it. How might we discuss the anointing of the sick with a child to help them to grow in faith, hope, and love?

## The healing Jesus offers is for the whole person: body, mind, and spirit.

Like all sacraments, the anointing of the sick was instituted by Christ. When Jesus walked on this earth, he healed many people. Depending on the age of the child, I would share one of the healing miracles in the Gospels, showing that the healing Jesus offers is for the whole person: body, mind, and spirit. Jesus' actions also reveal that illness and death are not God's will for us, and that he will eventually wipe every tear from our eyes (see Revelation 21:4).

In the Scriptures, we also see that Jesus commissioned his friends to go out and heal people in his name. When the priest anoints a person who is ill, he is acting *in persona*



The sacrament of the anointing of the sick helps us experience the healing touch of Jesus.

*Christi*; he brings Christ's healing grace to someone experiencing serious illness. In the Bible, Jesus is moved with compassion for people who are suffering. The priest, along with members of the Christian community who are present during the celebration of this sacrament—including family members, and even care providers—offer prayers for and embody Christ's compassion to the ill person.

Your child may also be curious about the oil of the sick that is used in the anointing rite. It is olive oil (like you have in the kitchen) that has been blessed for this purpose by the bishop.

The most important thing we can communicate to the children in our lives about this sacrament is that God is close to us in our sickness and suffering. He cares for each one of us, and through this sacrament, he gives the person who is ill the help of his grace—either by strengthening them in mind or spirit, or, at times, even by bringing about their physical healing.