# Opening Prayer Service

### Gather

Communicate the following using the words below or your own words.

Hands are an important element of the celebration of the sacrament of the sick. During the celebration the priest lays his hands on the head of the sick person and anoints the sick person on the hands and forehead.

We pray in celebration of hands and healing.

God of grace, source of all love, you love us more than we will ever be able to imagine. Through your love and compassion, you heal us and support us in times of illness. Help us to be people who serve and support the ill and elderly in our community, that all may know your great love and compassion. We ask this prayer through the resurrected Lord Jesus. Amen.

### Listen

Mark 5:21-24

### Respond

**Leader**: Please raise your hands high in prayer with palms up towards the heavens as we listen to a short reading from the Book of Kings.

**Reader 1:** Then Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands to heaven. (1 Kings 8:22)

**Leader**: Mighty God, we raise our hands in hopeful reception to you knowing that through you all gifts including healing are possible. Thank you for the gifts you place in our hands.

Please fold your hands as in prayer as we listen to a reading from Psalm 28.

**Reader 2:** Hear the voice of my supplication, as I cry to you for help, as I lift up my hands toward your most holy sanctuary. (Psalm 28:2)

**Leader**: Compassionate God, we fold our hands in prayer to you trusting that you will respond to our cries for help. Thank you for inviting us into relationship with you through the grace of prayer.

Please clap your hands three times in preparation for a reading from Psalm 47.

**Reader 3:** Clap your hands, all you peoples; shout to God with loud songs of joy. (Psalm 47:1)

**Leader**: God of hope, we clap our hands in joy celebrating the gift of hope you share with us. Thank you for hands blessed with joy and hope to praise you.

Please place your hand gently upon the shoulder of someone beside you as we listen to a reading from the Gospel of Mark.

**Reader 4:** He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village; and when he had put saliva on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, "Can you see anything?" (Mark 8:23)

**Leader**: God of healing, you gently place your hands upon us and heal us. Thank you for hands blessed with healing touch.

Please hold your neighbor’s hands and raise your arms in the air for our next reading from Exodus.

**Reader 5:** But Moses' hands grew weary; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; so his hands were steady until the sun set. (Exodus 17:12)

**Leader**: God of community, you call us to support one another in times of illness and struggle. Thank you for hands that lift and support one another.

Please reach out and hold another neighbor’s hand as in the sign of peace as we listen to a reading from Psalm 143.

**Reader 6**: I stretch out my hands to you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land. (Psalm 143:6)

**Leader**: God who quenches all thirst, you call us to reach out to you and to others for help. Thank you for hands that reach out to ask for help.

Please place your hands over your heart as we listen to a reading from the Gospel of Luke.

**Reader 7:** Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last. (Luke 23:46)

**Leader**: God of generous love, you call us to place our trust in you just like Jesus did. Thank you for hands that can be trusted and for hands that have the courage to trust.

Please join your hands in prayer as we pray in unity with one another, Jesus, and the Church around the world. Our Father …

### Go Forth

Merciful and generous God, when we are afraid, give us courage, when afflicted, give us patience, when dejected, afford us hope, and when alone, assure us of the support of your holy people.

We offer this prayer in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

(Adapted from *Pastoral Care of the Sick* #125)

# Handout #1.

# Jesus’ Acts of Healing: Jesus and His Followers Reveal All!

*Enter Jesus*

Welcome to my new game show – Jesus and His Followers Reveal All! Jesus is my name, and I am your host and a central player in the events that you will soon hear about. Your job during this show is to guess who the follower is that is sharing their story of healing. I know, your knowledge of the four gospels is a little bit less than mine so I have given you a list of the six people you are going to meet. Your job, after each person shares, is to work together to decide who the speaker was. Once we have visited with all six people, we will check in to see which groups got the most right. Ready? Let’s meet guest number one.

Our first guest was a person of great faith.

*Enter the Centurion*

I was a leader in my own right, with men who always responded to my orders when they were issued. Someone who worked for me became ill, and I knew that Jesus could heal them so I went and found Jesus to seek his help. Jesus offered to come to my house right away but as a non-Jew I didn’t think it was a good idea for him to come into my home. I knew that if Jesus simply said that my employee would be healed he would be. And he did. He also commended me for my faith, saying that he had not seen such faith in anyone in all of Israel. As I look back now, I see that Jesus healed my servant not just out of love and compassion but to show his followers that God’s kingdom was open to all. Thank you, Jesus, for your gift of healing in my life.

*Exit the Centurion*

*Jesus*

So, who do you think this leader was? Take a minute and make your choice.

Our second guest almost slipped by me unnoticed, amidst the throng of people trying to reach me.

*Enter the woman who was healed by touching Jesus’ cloak.*

I had been afflicted with a disease that caused bleeding which made me unclean in the laws of my time. Being unclean meant that no one was to touch me for fear of being tainted or damaged themselves. You have to remember that we did not have the technology like x-rays and cat scans that your world takes for granted. Many of our medical conditions were associated with sin, or that the person had done something wrong. I had tried to find a doctor to heal me and nothing worked. I knew in my heart that if I could just touch Jesus I would be healed. Jesus was surrounded by people so I only managed to touch the tassel on his cloak but that was enough. I was healed instantly! I was astounded yet shouldn’t have been when Jesus felt me touch him. He shouted out, trying to find who had just touched him and I let him know that it was me. He saved my life, yet he praised my faith for being the source of my healing. Thank you, Jesus, for giving me back contact with other people through your gift of healing.

*Exit the woman who was healed by touching Jesus’ cloak.*

*Jesus*

So, who do you think this woman was? Take a minute and make your choice.

I was approached by many people for healing, but this gentleman was one of the most persistent I met.

*Enter Bartimaeus*

I was at my usual post, begging, for there was not much else for someone in my condition to do in order to survive. Without my sight, it was hard for me to find work and I had few family members to take care of me. Jesus’ work and ministry were already well known in my area so when I heard that it was Jesus approaching I knew that it was now or never. If I was going to be healed I knew it would be through him and that now was my chance. I yelled even when people around me told me to stop. I called out to Jesus, Son of David, to heal me and he heard my cry. He gave me my sight and I followed him immediately. Thank you Jesus for enabling me to see and to follow you.

*Exit Bartimaeus.*

*Jesus*

You’ve just got to admire his perseverance. So, who do you think this man was? Take a minute and make your choice.

Physical disabilities were very challenging in my time. Without things such as wheelchairs, when one was physically disabled it was extremely difficult to do basic life tasks or to obtain work. Even on the Sabbath I was called to heal especially when I met people in such physical discomfort and pain.

*Enter the crippled woman.*

For 18 years I hobbled around as best as I could in my crooked condition, completely incapable of standing erect. How does one haul water, or gather wood, or prepare meals, or move about when standing up is a painfully impossible task? What is amazing in my story is that Jesus found me –I was at the synagogue on the Sabbath listening to Jesus teach when he saw me, called out to tell me that I was set free of my infirmity. He laid his hands on me and I stood straight. The joy that filled me was incredible as I dashed about the synagogue, freely moving, giving glory to God. Thank you, Jesus, for seeing me and having compassion for me.

*Exit the crippled woman.*

*Jesus*

How great it is to see people praise God for his great gifts! So, who do you think this person was? Take a minute and make your choice.

People with skin disorders were avoided by others who did not touch them. Like most disorders of the time, sickness was seen as being the result of sin. It may have been a sin that the person may have willingly committed, or a sin that was breaking a law that the person did not even know about.

*Enter leper.*

I am not sure what was harder, having open sores on my body or being totally excluded. No one was to be with near me, no one was to touch me, for fear of becoming unclean themselves. When I was able to reach Jesus I found myself simply saying, “Lord, if you wish you can make me clean.” He actually touched me and I was healed immediately and sent to show the priest. It was the priest at the temple who could reinstate me back into the community. I was finally able to be with people and not be seen as dirty or unworthy anymore! Thank you, Jesus, for giving me back my self-esteem and my relationships with others.

*Exit leper.*

*Jesus*

Being alone and sick, how awful that must be. So, who do you think this man was? Take a minute and make your choice.

I think that people with mental illness face such horrendous challenges. When you have a physical disease such as paralysis or cancer people seem to accept it as disease easier than something like depression or other mental illnesses.

*Enter Canaanite Woman*

I was not even an Israelite when I cried out to Jesus to heal my daughter who suffered from mental illness. Mental illness in my time was seen to be the work of an evil spirit, a demon taking over someone’s body. I loved my daughter and would do anything to help her, including begging and pleading with Jesus not to serve only the Israelites but to share his power and healing with my people too. My faith in Jesus was great, and I was unwilling to walk away from him without my daughter being healed so we spent some time in passionate discussion before Jesus agreed to heal my daughter. Thank you, Jesus, for giving my daughter her life back and for including all peoples in your mission.

*Exit Canaanite Woman*

*Jesus*

That woman would have made a great debate team leader! Who do you think this person was? Take a minute and make your choice. So do you think you know these people? Who was our number one guest?

*Confirm the right answers, and if you have an actor for each guest have them step forward to be identified, pulling off their “disguise” once their identity is confirmed.)*

Thank you for joining our show today! Stay tuned for tomorrow’s program, during which my disciples reveal all about their travels with me! Life to the full for all of you!!

*Exit Jesus and Guests*

# Handout #2.

# Jesus’ Acts of Healing – Guest List

### Invited Guests

Leper

Woman with a Hemorrhage

Centurion

Leper

Bartimaeus

Crippled Woman

### In what order did they appear on the show?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

# Handout #3.

# Sacrament of Anointing—Central Moments

As celebrated in the opening prayer, hands and touch play a central role in the sacrament of anointing. We will use the symbol of the hand to help us to learn about and remember the central moments in this sacrament.

### Hands

Our hand is an amazing part of our body. As a pair or alone, we highly depend on it for many of the things we do each day. What are some of the things we do with our hands?

Hands communicate a lot about who we are too. We can recognize a young child by their small and soft hands. We can recognize mechanics and plumbers by the grease that often stains their hands. We see someone’s marital status by checking out their ring finger.

In the sacrament of anointing, one of the first actions is the laying on of hands by the priest. What is important about the laying on of hands? What is the action about?

Touch is so important when we are trying to convey to another that we are there for them and that we will support them in their time of need.

We say Amen through the laying on of hands to our faith in God’s healing power. We say yes to being God’s healing presence in the world.

When we think of our hands through this learning session, may they remind us to touch one another with love and respect, sharing the healing power of our faith in Jesus.

### Thumb

Hold your thumb up so that you can celebrate its uniqueness.

Your thumb is the strongest finger on your hand. Maybe that is why it is on the bottom portion of the hand and is the finger closest to the rest of the body! What do we use our thumbs to do?

In the sacrament of the sick the priest usually uses his thumb to anoint the recipients on their forehead and on their hands. Oil for us as Catholics is a strong symbol of healing, strength, and celebration of being marked as a child of God. Use your thumb to trace a cross on your forehead and on your hands to remind yourself of your Christian faith.

As we celebrate the sacrament of the sick, we say amen to the power of suffering that brings us closer to Christ and reminds us that suffering leads to new life with Christ.

May our thumbs remind us that, like Christ in his suffering on the cross, the strength and compassion of God can carry us through any illness whether our own or that of someone close to us.

### Index Finger

Single out your pointing finger so you can celebrate its uniqueness. Did you know that it is usually the most flexible of all our fingers?

What is your index finger used for? Why is it called an index finger?

In the sacrament of anointing the prayers and the readings and the ritual moments point us to God as the source of hope and strength in our time of need, a God who is the one constant in our life.

When we celebrate the sacrament of the sick we say Amen to hope. We say Amen to God’s love for us when we hurt. We say Amen to walking with others in hopeful presence.

May our index finger, our pointing finger, remind us to take care of the sick with the gentleness and compassion of God.

### Middle Finger

Hold your whole hand up again. Which finger is the tallest? It’s the middle finger, right?

In the rite of anointing, usually before the laying on of the hands, the community prays together a litany for the needs of the sick person and those who care for them. After each petition I pray, I invite you to respond with “Lord have Mercy.”

Free the sick from all harm: *Lord have mercy*.

Relieve the sufferings of the sick: *Lord have mercy*.

Assist all those dedicated to the care of the sick: *Lord have mercy*.

Give life and health to our sick brothers and sisters, on whom we lay hands in your name: *Lord have mercy.*

Through the sacrament of the sick we say Amen to prayerfully supporting the sick in our midst and we say Amen to supporting those who serve them directly.

Look again at your middle finger. It is surrounded by the support of two fingers on each side. That’s a good way to remember the litany—it is prayerfully surrounding the sick with the prayerful support of their community.

### Ring Finger

Try to raise just your ring finger – it is pretty hard to raise just that finger isn’t it? The ring finger is our weakest finger, the one most in need of help from the rest of the hand. The ring finger reminds us of the prayer that takes place after the anointing, a prayer that points us to God as the source of consolation and healing of body and spirit. One of the prayer options goes like this:

Father in heaven, through this holy anointing, grant N. comfort in his/her suffering.

When he/she is afraid, give him/her courage,

When afflicted, give him/her patience,

When dejected, afford him/her hope,

And when alone, assure him/her of the support of your holy people.

When we are sick, we are at our most vulnerable, and need to be reminded that God still holds us close and will not abandon us. The sacrament of the sick challenges us to say Amen to God as faithful friend, a light in the darkness, a shelter in life’s storms.

As we celebrate our ring finger, may it remind us to turn to God and others in our times of need.

### Little Finger

Raise your little finger if you can. It is not accustomed to standing on its own too much! Our little finger is just that—the littlest finger on our hand. Sometimes we join our pinky fingers when we make a special promise to someone that is important to us.

In the sacrament of anointing, we pause to pray together the Lord’s Prayer, the prayer that Jesus gave to all of us to pray confidently to God. God is our caring Father, and no matter how big or small our needs are, God is there for us.

The sacrament of the sick challenges us to say Amen to being a child of God, and to say Amen to being part of God’s community in service to those in need.

As we celebrate our little finger, we remember that we are God’s children and that no matter how big or small we feel our needs are God is there for all his people.

### Closing Activity

We close our reflection on the sacrament of anointing by learning a prayer for healing hands. Our fingers can help us not only remember the central movements in anointing but can be used as memory aids in prayer.

So we pray.

Beginning with our thumb, our strong finger, we pray for unity with Christ through the cross for all who are ill.

Moving to our index finger, we pray that all who are sick or dying may find themselves filled with hope in God’s love for them.

Continuing with our middle finger, we pray for all those who are facing illness and death alone, without the support of family and friends, that someone will remember them.

Moving to our ring finger, we pray for all who are feeling scared or angry as they deal with illness and death, that they may find comfort and strength.

And finally, our little finger calls us to pray for ourselves, that we might be strong in serving and loving others. Amen.

# Handout #4.

# CSI—Catholic Sacrament Investigation

Use page two of this handout to explore the Sacrament of Anointing to find the evidence/answers to the following questions. As you answer the questions, please note your “source,” which means when you find the answer to your question write it beneath the question along with what part of the rite it is from.

1. **Does the rite give you any clues as to “who” is to receive the sacrament of the sick?**

**If yes, who and what are the clues?**

1. **In what part of the rite do you most notice the fears and anxieties of the sick being named and prayed for?**
2. **What evidence can you gather about the community’s role in serving the sick? What is the community called to do through the celebration of the rite?**
3. **How many times during the rite are the ill touched by the priest? When?**
4. **What images or words in the rite are used to describe God, or Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?**
5. **Name the various people who are prayed for in the rite. For example, the sick person. Who else?**
6. **Summarize the rite in your own words by completing the following sentence:**

**Through the sacrament of anointing we as Catholics say Amen to, or say we believe in …**

# Sacrament of the Sick – “Evidence”

**Reception of the Sick (#135 B)**

Christ taught his disciples to be a community of love. In praying together, in sharing all things, and in caring for the sick, they recalled his words: “Insofar as you did this to one of these, you did it to me.” We gather today to witness to this teaching and to pray in the name of Jesus the healer that the sick may be restored to health. Through this eucharist and anointing we invoke his healing power.

**Opening Prayer (#136 B)**

God of compassion, you take every family under your care and know our physical and spiritual needs. Transform our weakness by the strength of your grace and confirm us in your covenant so that we may grow in faith and love. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

**Liturgy of the Word (#137)**

**Litany (#138)**

Let us pray to God for our brothers and sisters and for all those who devote themselves to caring for them.

Bless N. and N. and fill them with new hope and strength: Lord, have mercy.   
R. Lord, have mercy.

Relieve their pain: Lord, have mercy.

R. Lord, have mercy.

Free them from sin and do not let them give way to temptation: Lord, have mercy.

R. Lord, have mercy.

Sustain all the sick with your power: Lord, have mercy.

R. Lord, have mercy.

Assist all who care for the sick: Lord, have mercy.

R. Lord, have mercy.

Give life and health to our brothers and sisters on whom we lay our hands in your name:

Lord, have mercy.

R. Lord, have mercy.

**Laying On of Hands**

In silence, the priest lays his hands on the head of each sick person.

**Prayer Over the Oil (#140, Thanksgiving over Blessed Oil)**

The oil for anointing is usually consecrated at the chrism mass by the Bishop each year. Hence, in most celebrations of anointing the priest does not need to bless or consecrate the oil of healing so offers a prayer of thanksgiving for it.

Praise to you, God, the almighty Father.

You sent your Son to live among us and bring us salvation.

R. Blessed be God who heals us in Christ.

Praise to you God, the only begotten Son.

You humbled yourself to share in our humanity and you heal our infirmities.

R. Blessed be God who heals us in Christ.

Praise to you, God, the Holy Spirit, the Consoler.

Your unfailing power gives us strength in our bodily weakness.

R. Blessed be God who heals us in Christ.

God of mercy, ease the sufferings and comfort the weakness of your servants whom the church anoints with this holy oil. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Anointing**

The priest anoints the sick person with the blessed oil. First he anoints the forehead saying:

Through this holy anointing may the Lord in love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Then he anoints the hands, saying:

May the Lord who frees you from sin save you and raise you up.

**Prayer After Anointing (#125)**

Father in heaven, through this holy anointing  
grant N. comfort in his/her suffering.

When he/she is afraid, give him/her courage,  
when afflicted, give him/her patience,  
when dejected, afford him/her hope,  
and when alone, assure him/her of the support of your holy people.

**The Lord’s Prayer**

**Final Blessing (#147 C)**

May the God of all consolation bless you in every way and grant you hope all the days of your life.

R. Amen

May God restore you to health and grant you salvation.

R. Amen

May God fill your heart with peace and lead you to eternal life.

R. Amen.

# Handout #5.

# Faith Sharing on the Sacrament of the Sick

Thank you for saying yes to sharing the story of your experience of illness and the Sacrament of the Anointing.

Share your reflections on the following questions and other insights that surface as important to you. Reflect on and be ready to speak about your experience—the good moments, the challenging moments, the insights you have gleaned about illness or death, and how God has been a part of your suffering.

Practice sharing your reflections and remember the 5 to 10-minute time frame that you have to share your story.

* **What are the circumstances of your participation in the celebration of the sacrament?**

* **What did you appreciate most about the celebration? How did it affect family and friends if they were participating with you?**
* **How has your faith been part of your journey with illness and/or death? How have you grown to understand suffering through the lens of Christ’s death and resurrection?**
* **How has your faith community helped you on your journey? What advice or practical suggestions do you have to offer a faith community to improve its service and support of the sick and dying?**
* **What hopes and prayers do you offer to someone else who might find themselves in your situation?**
* **If someone said to you, “I never know what to say or do around someone who is seriously sick or his or her family member,” what advice would you give?**

# Handout #6.

# Sample Faith Sharing

The first time I experienced the sacrament of the sick was when a member of my religious community was diagnosed with terminal cancer. I was not present when she first received the sacrament prior to her first surgery and treatment, but I was there when her battle with cancer was being lost to the disease.

Caroline was a bubbly, outgoing woman whose joy was uncontainable. Even when she became ill and was confined to bed she radiated a faith in God’s love for her that seemed to drown out the fear of death that hung in her room from her family and friends.

When she received the sacrament, it was in her room with many of her religious community gathered around her. The pastor at the parish was the presider. He had also been one of her good friends as they had entered religious life at about the same time. When he rubbed the oil on her forehead and her hands it was like she was being treated like a princess receiving her daily massage. She was quite weak by this time and speaking was difficult, but her Amens after each prayer were as strong as they had ever been.

Previous to my journey with Caroline, I had not experienced anyone close to me dying, or at least dying with such a grace filled preparation time. I hate goodbyes, and even though I knew in my head that Caroline was going to be with God and experience life beyond my imagining, it was still so hard for me to say goodbye. As we celebrated the sacrament that day, I felt that the prayers included our pain and our fears and our reluctance to let go of her. It was like we were being reminded and challenged to trust ever more deeply in God’s love for us and to believe again that suffering is not an end unto itself but a path to greater life and blessings with God. I could feel God wrapping all of us in his love and consoling us and Caroline. It still hurt, but it was a hurt that was not beyond consolation.

Journeying with Caroline pushed me to appreciate life in greater ways. I found myself attempting to make better choices about how I use my time and being present to my family and friends.

Caroline was blessed with a lot of support from her community and friends and family as she died. Her parish also wrapped us in support, bringing by food, offering to help us with yard and house care, and by leaving notes of prayer and encouragement for Caroline.

I don’t know if I could handle illness as gracefully as Caroline did, but I know that her courage in talking about her disease and her honesty in sharing how she was feeling helped all of us to deal with the disease too. Hope for her was not giving up but hoping for the miracle of a cure while trusting that what needed to be would be. So it was not a ‘passive I’ve given up experience’ but one of living each moment in a hope-filled positive way.

Caroline’s humor also helped a great deal. Her jokes about how easy it was to do her hair now that she had none, her grace at being carried up and down the stairs when she couldn’t do it by herself anymore, were gifts of hope and life to us as we wrestled with losing her.

Suffering and illness are pretty much a mystery to me, but I do know that God’s love and care for his people is what carried me through that challenging, yet life-giving time.

One of the things Caroline taught me was the power of simply being with another. I always wanted to do things for her—gather her favorite music, get a letter from the music show host that she loved, and so on. But the doing seemed more for me than for her, and that was Okay. She taught me that just sitting quietly with her in her room gently stroking her hand was often all that she needed. No words, no doing, just simply being present to her through gentle touch. It’s hard for us, at least it was hard for me, to realize I could do very little to save her from the disease. I could do something by doing nothing through the gift of just being present, which was actually the best something of all.

# Handout #7.

# Reflecting on Illness and Faith

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| Reflection #1  “Illness and suffering have always been among the gravest problems confronted in human life. In illness, man experiences his powerlessness, his limitations, and his finitude. Every illness can make us glimpse death” (CCC 1500).  “Illness can lead to anguish, self-absorption, sometimes even despair and revolt against God. It can also make a person more mature, helping him discern in his life what is not essential so that he can turn toward that which is. Very often illness provokes a search for God and a return to him” (CCC 1501).   * How do you hope you will be able to handle serious illness? * Do you think illness has a purpose or do you think it is simply something that happens to humanity because we were created finite? | Reflection #2  “The Anointing of the Sick "is not a sacrament for those only who are at the point of death. Hence, as soon as anyone of the faithful begins to be in danger of death from sickness or old age, the fitting time for him to receive this sacrament has certainly already arrived" (CCC 1514).  “If a sick person who received this anointing recovers his health, he can in the case of another grave illness receive this sacrament again. If during the same illness the person's condition becomes more serious, the sacrament may be repeated. It is fitting to receive the Anointing of the Sick just prior to a serious operation. The same holds for the elderly whose frailty becomes more pronounced” (CCC 1515).   * What do you think qualifies as grave illness? Is the catechism defining it as illness that can lead to death? * Before the 1970’s, when was the sacrament of the sick most commonly celebrated? [Hint: death is in the answer.] |

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| Reflection #3  “The special grace of the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick has as its effects:   * the uniting of the sick person to the passion of Christ, for his own good and that of the whole Church; * the strengthening, peace, and courage to endure in a Christian manner the sufferings of illness or old age; * the forgiveness of sins, if the sick person was not able to obtain it through the sacrament of Penance; * the restoration of health, if it is conducive to the salvation of his soul; * the preparation for passing over to eternal life” (CCC 1532). * Which grace surfaces as most meaningful for you? * What do you think this phrase means: “uniting of the sick person to the passion of Christ”? | Reflection #4  “Giving Blood many years ago, when I worked as a transfusion volunteer at Stanford Hospital, I got to know a little girl named Liza who was suffering from a disease and needed blood from her five-year-old brother, who had miraculously survived the same disease and had developed the antibodies needed to combat the illness. The doctor explained the situation to her little brother, and asked the boy if he would be willing to give his blood to his sister. I saw him hesitate for only a moment before taking a deep breath and saying, ‘Yes, I'll do it if it will save Liza.’  “As the transfusion progressed, he lay in bed next to his sister and smiled, as we all did, seeing the color returning to her cheeks. Then his face grew pale and his smile faded. He looked up at the doctor and asked with a trembling voice, "Will I start to die right away?" Being young, the boy had misunderstood the doctor; he thought he was going to have to give her all his blood”   * How does this story make concrete the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus? |

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| Reflection #5  The "meaning" and "purpose" of our lives is intertwined with hope. Hope is the "enduring feeling that life makes sense." When life makes sense, it can be transcended in the sense that one can rise above it psychologically and not be emotionally defeated by it. It is possible that by taking such a position a person may actually live longer.   * How do you think Christian faith enables a person to be hope-filled? * How does a person nurture their sense of hope? | Reflection #6  What changes are hoped for during the course of illness?  The National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship calls this "the changing mosaic of hope." When symptoms force us to see the doctor for an examination, as we wait for the results, we hope there won't be anything seriously wrong. After a diagnosis of serious illness, generally the first thing for which we hope is a complete cure. Later, after treatment, we may hope for an extended period of remission before the disease recurs or for control of symptoms for a long time. When the disease is in the advanced stage, there is still much to hope for: living to see a daughter graduate, energy to take a trip to a place we've always wanted to visit, a slow rate of deterioration, lessening of pain, having a peaceful, dignified death.   * Do you agree with this analysis of hope? * Are there any hopes that remain constant throughout one’s life? Give some examples. |

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| Reflection #7  “When we honestly ask ourselves which person in our life means the most to us, we often find that it is those who, instead of giving advice, solutions, or cures, have chosen rather to share our pain and touch our wounds with a gentle and tender hand. The friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in an hour of grief and bereavement, who can tolerate not knowing, not curing, not healing and face with us the reality of our powerlessness, that is a friend who cares” (  Henri Nouwen).   * Do you agree with Nouwen’s quote? Why or why not? | Reflection #8  “It is not a question of God allowing or not allowing things to happen. It is part of living. Some things we do to ourselves, other things we do to each other. Our Father knows about every bird which falls to the ground, but He does not always prevent it from falling. What are we to learn from this? That our response to what happens is more important than what happens. Here is a mystery: one man’s experience drives him to curse God, while another man’s identical experience drives him to bless God. Your response to what happens is more important than what happens”  (Chip Brogden).  “Suffering has been stronger than all other teaching, and has taught me to understand what your heart used to be. I have been bent and broken, but - I hope - into a better shape” (Charles Dickens).   * Why do you think some people’s response to suffering and challenges is more positive or life giving than others? |

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| Reflection #9  “I do not believe that sheer suffering teaches. If suffering alone taught, all the world would be wise, since everyone suffers. To suffering must be added mourning, understanding, patience, love, openness, and a willingness to remain vulnerable”  Anne Morrow Lindbergh).   * Do you agree with this quote? Why or why not? * What other attributes or practices would you add to her list to help obtain wisdom? | Reflection #10  “For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.  “Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:24-28).   * We, each and every Christian, are the saints referred to in this Scripture passage. * What do you think the writer of this New Testament letter meant when he wrote, “Now hope that is seen is not hope”? |

# Handout #8.

# Called to Healing: Serving the Ill and Dying

**Note to Facilitator**:

This handout needs to be modified to include all the options that your parish provides to the sick and dying, providing descriptive details if possible.

**What can we do to serve the sick and dying? Here are a few options to consider.**

### Visiting

* Become part of the parish’s team that brings communion after weekend liturgy to shut ins and hospital patients.
* Become part of the team that visits hospital patients.
* Make a commitment to visit a shut-in on a regular basis.
* Provide transportation to those needing it to visit an ill parishioner or their loved ones.
* Make regular phone calls to shut-ins.

### Support

* Create or write cards on behalf of the parish to the ill.
* Provide housekeeping, yard, or meal preparation support.
* Provide transportation to medical appointments or to Mass.
* Find out who in your neighborhood is ill and needs help.
* Provide childcare support.
* Express gratitude to health care workers, hospital chaplains, and so on.

### Prayer

* Commit to daily pray for those who are sick and dying.

# Handout #9.

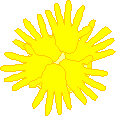
# Prayer Flower Activity

**Materials Needed**

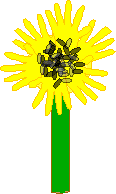
Small plain paper plate, paper towel tube or cardboard tube, green construction paper (sheet), yellow construction paper (a few sheets), scissors, pencil, tape, glue, stapler

### Steps

1. The Stem of the Sunflower: Use glue or tape to wrap a piece of green construction paper around a paper towel tube or cardboard tube.
2. The Petals of the Sunflower: Trace handprints on yellow construction paper. Cut them out. You'll need about 6 handprints. On each handprint write a word of blessing for a sick person—hope, love, peace, courage, healing, etc.
3. The Sunflower: Glue or staple the handprints around the small paper plate.



1. Put a small layer of glue in the center of the flower. Place a heart-shaped piece of construction paper in the center. Staple the stem to the flower (you'll have to flatten the top of the paper towel tube/cardboard tube in order to staple it). You now have a large flower!



# Handout #10.

# Personal Health Responsibility

“The Bible has clearly taught us that our God is a God of life, who desires healing and health of our body, mind, soul. Thus, all of us are called to preserve, protect, and even enhance our health. In this way we will not only avoid being an undue burden on others, but more importantly share in restoring the original goodness of God’s creation”

(*New Hope in Christ—A Pastoral Message on Health and Healing*, CCCB, 1983).

Disease and illness affect the healthy and the unhealthy, but we know there are things we can do to put ourselves less at risk for illness of the body, mind, or soul.

The *circle of life* exercise helps participants evaluate their life to surface areas that are out of balance or in need of attention.

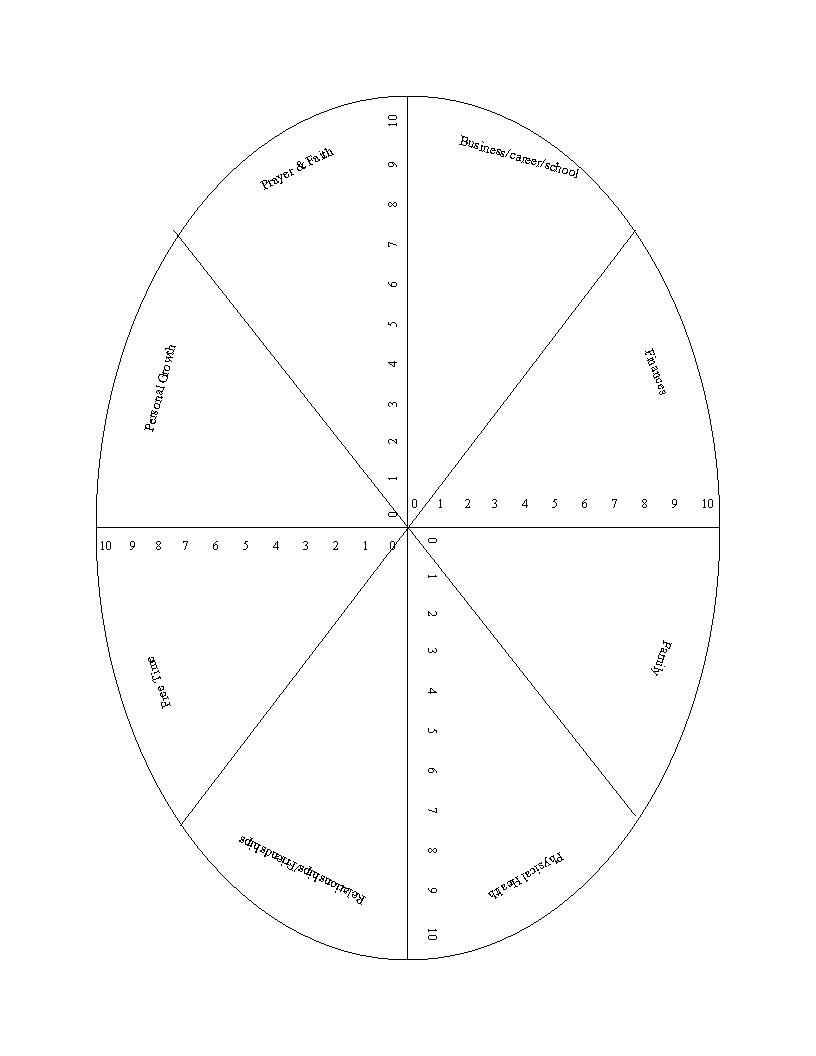
The eight sections of the *circle of life* exercise represent a balanced lifestyle. Label each section of the circle with areas of your life relevant to you. On a scale of 0-10, set 0 (zero) as the center of the circle and 10 as the outer edge. Consider 10 to be your highest level of satisfaction.

Rank your level of satisfaction with each area of your life by drawing a line across each "wedge" in such a way as to create a "circle within a circle" which most likely will not be round. This will give you a snapshot of where you are "out of balance" in life.

**Design Note:**

Create a circle divided into 8 pieces, like a pie (illustration below). The names on each piece of the pie, found at the widest point of the crust for each piece, are:

1. prayer and faith
2. business/career/school
3. finances
4. family
5. physical health
6. relationships/friendships
7. free time
8. personal growth



### Group Sharing

Once you have completed your assessment, share your reflections on what the assessment seems to be telling you. What areas do you need to work on? In what areas are you strong?

### Action Plan

Identify two or three areas that you would like to work on and respond to the questions for each:

**Area One: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

* What are your hopes for this area that you feel you are not achieving? Are they realistic yet challenging? For example, why did you give yourself the rating you gave yourself?
* What are three goals you would like to develop in this area?
* What action steps could you take to achieve those goals?

**Area Two: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

* What are your hopes for this area that you feel you are not achieving? Are they realistic yet challenging? For example, why did you give yourself the rating you gave yourself?
* What are three goals you would like to develop in this area?
* What action steps could you take to achieve those goals?

**Area Three: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

* What are your hopes for this area that you feel you are not achieving? Are they realistic yet challenging? For example, why did you give yourself the rating you gave yourself?
* What are three goals you would like to develop in this area?
* What action steps could you take to achieve those goals?

# Closing Prayer Service

### Gather

Blessed be you, Father of compassion and God of all encouragement. Loving God, we thank you for your call to serve in your healing ministry. Strengthen our faith, hope, and love. Take care of all who face the threat of illness and pain. We pray in faith. Amen.

### Listen

”It is very important to realize that compassion is more than sympathy or empathy. When we are asked to listen to the pains of people and empathize with their suffering, we soon reach our emotional limits. We can listen only for a short time and only to a few people. In our society we are bombarded with so much "news" about human misery that our hearts easily get numbed simply because of overload. But God’s compassionate heart does not have limits. God’s heart is greater, infinitely greater, than the human heart. It is that divine heart that God wants to give to us so that we can love all people without burning out or becoming numb. It is for this compassionate heart that we pray when we say: "A pure heart create for me, O God, put a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence, nor deprive me of your holy spirit" (Ps 51). The Holy Spirit of God is given to us so that we can become participants in God’s compassion and so reach out to all people at all times with God’s heart” (Henri Nouwen, *Here and Now*, pp. 109-110).

### Anointing of Hands

To celebrate the power of healing, and to be reminded of how God bathes us in the healing power of his love, we are now going to anoint each other’s hands.

First, we bless the oil we are about to use:

Creator God, bless this oil we are about to use to remember your gift of love and healing to us. May it strengthen us to serve those who suffer and open our hearts to all that needs healing and hope. We bless this oil in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen

Simply come forward to the anointing stations in pairs. Using your thumb, make the sign of the cross with the oil in your partner’s palm as you say, “Be healed in Christ.”

### Go Forth

God of goodness and love, hear our prayers for a compassionate heart and gentle hands as we remember the sick members of our community and those who care for them. Make us compassionate healers like your Son Jesus. Amen.