

Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick

Session Focus

This session explores the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick. It explores what we say yes to, what we say Amen to, as we celebrate Anointing—both the person and family celebrating the sacrament and the church community. This session calls us to examine how we are called to be like Christ as we work to serve and heal others and as we deal with our own illness and suffering.

As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states:

"By the sacred anointing of the sick and the prayer of the priests the whole Church commends those who are ill to the suffering and glorified Lord, that he may raise them up and save them. And indeed she exhorts them to contribute to the good of the People of God by freely uniting themselves to the Passion and death of Christ." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1499)

"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." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1532)

Learning Objectives

This session on Anointing guides learners of all ages to:

- comprehend the symbols and meaning of the sacrament of anointing
- value suffering and illness as part of humanity's journey to God
- examine how they can serve and support the sick
-

Session Overview

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Part 1. (10-15 minutes) | Gathering and Opening Prayer Service |
| Part 2. (20 minutes) | All Ages Learning Experience: Jesus' Acts of Healing |
| Part 3. (80-90 minutes) | In Depth Learning Experience: Sacrament of Anointing |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Option 1. Whole Group Format: All participants remain in the same room.• Option 2. Age Groups Format: Participants go to separate rooms for parallel learning: families with children, adolescents, adults. |
| Part 4. (20-25 minutes) | Sharing Learning Experiences |
| Part 5. (10 minutes) | Closing Prayer Service |

Design Options for In-Depth Learning

Option 1. Whole Group Format

This format guides the entire assembly through each of the learning experiences. You might choose this format if you have:

- a large physical space with good acoustics/sound system and furniture to comfortably accommodate the learners
- a competent large group facilitator/master of ceremonies able to provide clear directions and to manage the dynamics and energy of a large group
- a group of catechists who feel comfortable moving through the assembly offering assistance, or a large enough team of table leader catechists to have one catechist work with each table group
- a learning topic that lends itself to everyone learning the same thing at the same time, but in different ways, in the same space

Facilitation Tips for This Format:

Guide small groups through each of the activities at the same time.

- Organize people into table groups based on age groupings: families with children (grades 1-5), middle school adolescents, high school adolescents, young adults, and adults.
- The lead facilitator guides the entire group through each of the learning experiences. All presentations and activity instructions are given to the whole group.
- The age-appropriate learning activities within each learning experience are conducted in table groups.
- Where needed, catechists and small group leaders facilitate the work of the table groups.

Option 2. Age Group Format

This format provides for three separate parallel learning programs. Though age groups are separated, each one is focusing on the same topic. You might choose this format if you have:

- an adequate number of meeting spaces for the various groups to gather
- an adequate number of competent facilitators and catechists to work with each group
- a topic that is best explored through age-specific learning

Facilitation Tips for This Format

- Organize participants into three or more parallel learning groups: families with children (grades 1-5), adolescents (grades 6-12), and adults.
- If there are a large number of adolescents, divide them into two groups: middle school and high school.

Organize separate groups for young adults, adults, and older adults. Or you can give the adults their own choice for forming small groups.

- Direct the adolescents and adults into small groups. Give them all the handouts and learning materials needed for the learning experiences
- Guide the families with children into table groups of two or more families. Give each table all the handouts and learning materials necessary for the learning experiences.

- A facilitator must guide all the of the families through each learning experience, while catechist move from table to table assisting.

Materials Needed

Gathering

- Name tags
- Community building activities
- Opening Prayer Service – copies for the leader and readers
- Bible

All Ages Opening Learning Experience

- Copies of the drama and suggested clothing

In-Depth Learning Experience

- Handouts
- Supplies for learning activities (see activity descriptions to ascertain which supplies are needed for each activity)

Closing

- Closing Prayer Service—copy for the leader and musicians
- Bible

Session Plan

Part 1. Gathering and Opening Prayer (15-20 minutes)

Registration and Hospitality

- Welcome people and ask them to sign in for the program.
- Provide name tags or invite people to make their own.
- Distribute the handouts participants will need for the session—you can also distribute handouts for the activities at the beginning of the activity.
- Invite people to share a meal. Depending on the time of day, the program may end with a meal. Some optional learning activities for use during the meal follow below. These may be used as the table waits for food or waits for other groups to be finished eating.
 - Oil and Healing: Make a list of all the ways we use oil to heal or protect our bodies.
 - Jesus and Healing: Make a list of all the illnesses and conditions that Jesus healed for people.
 - Discuss: Have you ever faced or currently face a serious illness? What were/are the challenges and blessings of doing so?

Welcome the participants to the program and introduce the theme of the session, in your own words, using the following text:

This session explores the Sacrament of Anointing. It explores what we say yes to, what we say Amen to, as we celebrate Anointing—both the person and family celebrating the sacrament and the church community. This session calls us to examine how we are called to be like Christ as we work to serve and heal others and as we deal with our own illness and suffering.

Present an overview and the schedule of the program.

1. Group Formation

Organize people into intergenerational small groups of approximately eight people for the All Ages Learning Experience. Ask members of the same family to sit together in the intergenerational groups. Each group should have as many of the following categories as possible: family (parents, children, teens), young adults, adults without children, and older adults. If members of the same family are intergenerational—children, teens, parents, and grandparents—keep them together in one group.

For the In Depth Learning Experience (Part 3), organize the participants into three types of table groups: family clusters of two or more families, groups of adolescents, and groups of adults.

For the Sharing of Learning Experiences (Part 4,) participants will need to be in intergenerational groups of approximately eight people, reflecting the age diversity of the participants.

2. Opening Prayer Service

Preparation

Recruit a reader for the reading of Mark 5 and seven readers for the other Scripture readings. Place the giant hand shapes around the learning area.

Materials Needed

- Giant hand shapes
-

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

Proclaim 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)

Part 2. All Ages Learning Experience: Jesus' Acts of Healing: Jesus and His Followers Reveal All! (20 minutes)

The All Ages Learning Experience is designed to help the participants remember some of Jesus' acts of healing and to value the impact that healing had on the life of those healed.

Preparation

Seven actors are needed, one to play Jesus and six to play the various guests; or one male and one female actor are needed to play multiple roles. Practice the drama before the learning session making sure that the actors will be loud and clear in their presenting.

Materials Needed

- costumes for each actor – house coats or robes
- “disguises” for each actor to hide their facial features—dark sunglasses and hats, scarves, or paper bags
- music from Jeopardy or another TV game show to use while the participants make their guess
- copy of Handout # 1 for each actor and copy of Handout #2 for each table group
- Dramatic Presentation

Facilitate the following drama using your own words or the words below.

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.)

Number two? (And so on.)

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

Part 3. In Depth Learning Experience (80-90 minutes)

Families with Children Learning Experiences

- Learning Experience 1. A Sacrament of Anointing—Central Moments (20-25 minutes)
- Learning Experience 2. Faith Sharing on the Sacrament of the Sick (25-30 minutes)
- Learning Experience 3. Called to Healing: Serving the Ill and Dying (25-30 minutes)

Learning Experience 1. A Sacrament of Anointing—Central Moments

This learning experience explores the central moments in the Sacrament of Anointing through the symbol of our hand.

Materials

- Copy of Handout #3

Begin by communicating the following using the words below or your own words.

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?

(Potential answers to affirm and seek out include: *eat, wash, brush our teeth, write, play, pray.*)

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?

(Potential answers to affirm and seek out include: *Jesus often laid his hands on those he healed, the action symbolizes the sharing of the Spirit and God's healing and love with another.*)

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?

(Potential answers to affirm and seek out include: *hang on to something including someone else's hand, to indicate how we feel about something through the thumbs up or down action.*)

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?

(Potential answers to affirm and seek out include: *pointing to objects or things we are trying to draw attention to, it is one of the fingers that helps us to hold a pen or pencil.*)

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.

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.

Learning Experience 2. Faith Sharing on the Sacrament of the Sick

Preparation

Invite several people from your parish to share with the large group their experience of celebrating the sacrament of the sick. Faith sharing has the power to provide participants with a window into the experience of the sacrament of the sick. This window enables participants to get in touch with their own experience of the sacrament, if they have it, and to enable those who have not experienced the sacrament to get an inside view of it. To keep the group smaller, you may opt to create three faith sharing teams for this learning event, with one team sharing with the families with children group, another with the adolescents, and a third with the adults. Or create three intergenerational groups for the sharing.

Consider inviting the following candidates:

- someone who has personally received the sacrament and is dealing with serious illness;
- someone who has journeyed with another person who received the sacrament, perhaps the two of them sharing together on their experience;
- someone who journeyed with another person who was terminally ill and who may have received the sacrament at the onset of the disease and again when they were near death.

Gather with the faith sharers ahead of time to enable them to share their reflections with one another and with you to ensure that they have accomplished the task in the manner that you had hoped. Invite them to share their reflections on the following questions (Handout #5) and other insights that surface as important to them:

- What was the context for 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 hope 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 what to say or do around someone whose family member or friend is seriously sick", what advice would you give them?

A sample faith sharing is provided on Handout #6 to assist the faith sharers in creating their own or to use as a tool to share with the group in place of a real-life faith sharer.

Materials Needed

- card stock and envelopes to create notes, markers and pens
- Handouts #5 and #6 for faith sharers

Introduce the faith sharers to the participants and invite them to listen to their faith sharing. At the end of the sharing, allow a few minutes, if the presenters feel comfortable, for the participants to ask a few questions.

Conclude the faith sharing by inviting participants to decorate and write a note of encouragement for a sick person that they know or that the parish is praying for at this time.

Learning Experience 3. A Called to Healing: Serving the Ill and Dying

Preparation

This learning experience guides the participants to consider how they could be serving the sick in their community. Invite someone from the parish's outreach team to work with you in modifying Handout #8 to base it on the service done in your community and to share, during the learning experience, the parish's outreach opportunities with the participants.

Materials

- Colored construction paper (light colors—orange, yellow, pink, and green)
- Scissors, markers or crayons, glue, stapler and staples
- Cardboard rolled into tubes (about 12 inches long, one inch wide) or empty paper towel tubes
- Small paper plates
- Handouts #8 and #9

Pass out Handout #8. Introduce this activity with the following:

The whole Christian community, which includes you and me, is called to work together to continue Christ's healing mission. How can we be healers for others? How can we support those who are ill and dying? What can we do to live out our commitment to work with Jesus to bring his hope and healing to the world?

N. is here from our parish outreach committee to walk us through some options to serve the ill and dying in our community. Welcome N.!

After the presentation, invite the participants to make some choices, using Handout # 9, about what they could consider doing or continuing to do as part of their contribution to the healing ministry of the parish.

To conclude this learning experience, invite the participants to create a prayer flower that the parish will share with one of the ill or shut in from their parish. Share:

To conclude our reflections on serving, we are going to do one thing for the sick together. We are going to create a prayer flower for the parish to share with a sick person from our community. All of the instructions, complete with pictures, are provided for you on Handout #9 and all of the supplies you need can be found on your table. We will bring the flowers with us to the whole group sharing; after the session, they will be gathered to give away.

Create away!

Adolescent and Adult Learning Experiences

- Learning Experience 1. (20-25 minutes) Sacrament of Anointing—Central Moments OR CSI—Catholic Sacrament Investigation
- Learning Experience 2. (25-30 minutes) Faith Sharing on the Sacrament of the Sick OR Reflecting on Illness and Faith
- Learning Experience 3. (25-30 minutes) Called to Healing: Serving the Ill and Dying OR Personal Health Responsibility

Learning Experience 1. Option A: Sacrament of Anointing—Central Moments

If you choose this activity for your adolescents, find the outline under the Families with Children section.

Learning Experience 1. Option B: Catholic Sacrament Investigation

Materials Needed

- Handout #4

Activity

Using Handout #4, guide the participants to get in pairs or small groups to explore the sacrament of anointing by using questions to surface “evidence”/answers about the sacrament. After they have found all of their evidence, invite them to share their answers with the large group to see if there is agreement on what was found. Move through the questions one at a time, adding any content that they may have missed. Summarize what they think the sacrament of anointing’s central meanings are and what they believe we as a community say yes to, say amen to, as we celebrate the sacrament.

Learning Experience 2. Option A: Faith Sharing on the Sacrament of the Sick

If you choose this activity for your adolescents, find the outline under the Families with Children section.

Learning Experience 2. Option B: Reflecting on Illness and Faith

Preparation

Print Handout #7 onto card stock and cut the boxes into playing card size pieces.

Materials Needed

- Handout #7 cards

Invite adolescent and adult participants to engage in a discussion on Church teachings about illness and redemptive suffering using the Handout #7 cards. Tell them to be prepared to deal with some hard

questions on the why of suffering by reading the information cited in the background reading materials on the tab.

Divide learners into small groups of 6-8 people and give each participant in the group a different card. Invite them to trade their card with another person in their group if they are not comfortable working with the card they received. Have them read their card, ponder its meaning, and formulate a response to the question on the card to share with their small group. Continue until all cards are used or time is up.

Learning Experience 3. Option A: Called to Healing: Serving the Ill and Dying

If you choose this activity for your adolescents, find the outline under the Families with Children section.

Learning Experience 3. Option B: Personal Health Responsibility

Materials Needed

- Handout #10

Introduce this activity by sharing:

“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 be doing to put ourselves less at risk for illness of the body, mind, or soul.

Using Handout #10, guide participants through some reflection and application on how they are being responsible for their health and how they could be more responsible.

Part 4. Sharing Learning Reflections (20-25 minutes)

Materials Needed

- Colored paper large enough to trace their hand on
- Scissors, pens or markers

Ask participants to gather in intergenerational groups and to share what they have learned and created. Invite each person to trace their hand on a piece of paper, cut it out, and write on it words or images that will help them to remember what is significant to them about the sacrament of the sick. They are to bring their hand with them to the closing prayer service.

Then invite them to share their responses to the following question with their small group:

- What did you learn about anointing?
- What thought, phrase, or image are you carrying home with you?

Part 5. Closing Prayer Service (10 minutes)

Preparation

Invite a lector to proclaim the reading from Henri Nouwen.

Set up several anointing stations in the prayer space, each with a small bowl of scented oil. One prayer station for 20-30 people should be adequate.

Materials Needed

- Closing Prayer Handout for reader
- Anointing stations with a small bowl of scented oil

Invite people as they gather to place their paper hand from the whole group sharing in the center or front of the prayer space.

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." (from *Here and Now* by Henri Nouwen)

Respond with Anointing of Hands

To celebrate the power of healing our hands hold and to be reminded of how God bathes us in the healing power and hope of his love, we are now going to anoint each other's hands. Simply come up to the anointing stations in pairs and using your thumb make the sign of the cross with the oil in your partner's palm as you say, "Be healed in Christ".

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

I now invite you to the anointing stations, to "Be Healed in Christ".

Go Forth

God of goodness and love, hear our prayers for compassionate hearts 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.