

LESSON 31: Anointing and Healing in Scripture



REFERENCE

Page 207 [THE SACRAMENTS OF HEALING]



WHAT YOU NEED

- (2) Bibles or Scripture passages
- (3) TSM: 'Short History of the Sacrament'

AIM

- To introduce learners to scripture passages that deal with the anointing and healing of the sick

OUTCOMES

- KUI Learners are aware of the scriptural origins of the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick.

TEACHER'S NOTE

If possible, in the course of this unit of lessons:

- Get the learners to be at a celebration of the Sacrament of the Sick;
- Have a priest talk to the class about the rites of anointing and healing;
- Have a person who was ill and is convinced about the effect of prayer on their life and health to talk something of their experience with the class.

In anticipation of these lessons:

- Be at the 'Chrism Mass', usually held on Holy Thursday morning, though some Dioceses may have it on the Wednesday evening;

This unit has a particularly Catholic focus. Learners who are not Catholic need to be told this. They should be invited and encouraged to participate in the reflections and exercises, and to share their experiences of similar practices in their religious communities. We learn more deeply about our own tradition when we are in dialogue with the traditions of others.

LESSON OUTLINE

1 Introduction

Introduce this lesson by asking learners to answer the following questions:

- What is anointing? What is used during anointing?
- How is anointing related to healing? Invite a few learners to respond to this question
- Ask whether anyone has ever attended a celebration or an occasion when somebody was anointed? Who was anointed? Why was the person anointed? Who was administering this anointing? What did you observe?

2 Anointing in Scripture

Divide the learners into groups. Distribute Bibles or copies of scripture passages to the learners if they do not have personal Bibles.

- Ask each group to read one of the following passages about anointing and healing: James 5:13-16; Luke 8:40-56; Luke 9:37-43; Luke 13:10-13; Luke 7:11-19

- ii. Ask learners to discuss and summarise the reading, and to provide the class with the insight they gained from this reading.
- iii. Invite learners to give feedback from their discussion.
- iv. Conclude by summing up key points arising from the discussion in relation to the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.

3 The History of the Sacrament

Give the learners a short introduction to the history of this sacrament. The Lesson Materials page 'Short History of the Sacrament' will provide you with some ideas.

OTHER IDEAS

4 Cultural Perceptions of Illness

You could discuss illness and healing from a human and cultural perspective as well. The anointing of the sick is a rite that can be reassuring to the person who is ill. It reminds them that they are still in God's hands. The presence of family and friends also assures them that they are part of a community that cares for them. (Aspects of these themes are picked up in the lessons that follow.) But in many societies, illness is not only viewed as being produced by natural causes which can be diagnosed by a doctor, it is also understood as being linked to our relationships with others – family, friends, community, and so on. In African societies, for instance, illness is often viewed as symptomatic of something that has gone wrong in the area of human relations (and this includes the ancestors / *badimo* / *amadlozi* / *vhadzimu*). Healing, therefore, also requires a restoration or healing of relationships. Ask the class if this idea of illness can be found in the various faith communities that the learners come from. If so, ask them for examples of what might need to be done to heal relationships. Even in so-called 'western' societies a social link with illness is understood – one frequently hears 'stress' being named and blamed. But it's important not to stop with this interpersonal dimension. Some disease is caused by the work one does – think of phthisis, silicosis, or asbestosis among miners. Or environmental factors, together with poverty, in the case of malaria, cholera, and tuberculosis. Both of these examples raise the question of structural injustice – cholera may be endemic in some parts of the country, but if people there had sufficient access to clean water there would be isolated cases of cholera, but not large outbreaks. Likewise with HIV - if relationships between men and women were more equal and just, if neither person in a relationship wanted to put their partner at risk, the rate of infections would be seriously reduced. So, in some ways, it's possible to see many diseases as being able to take advantage of bad socio-economic, interpersonal, and psychological factors.

5 Individual Reflection

Ask learners to reflect individually on the following questions:

Have you ever been really sick? What did you feel? What positive/negative impact does sickness have on the spiritual growth of a person? Invite a few learners to share their experience with the class.

MATERIALS

TEACHER

Michael Pennock. 1981. 'Short History of the Sacrament' in *The Sacraments And You*. Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, p 193-196



Lesson Materials



Short History of the Sacrament

Our short discussion of this sacrament will highlight the New Testament period and the development of the sacrament through the ages.

A. New Testament Times.

1. *Jesus.* People came from all over to be cured by Jesus and Jesus responded to the many requests for healing (Mk 6:56), We have already seen examples of Jesus' healing ministry in the previous section. We also saw that Jesus gave his power of healing to the disciples who exercised this power even while Jesus was with them (Mk 6: 13).

2. *Early Church.* This chapter began with an important quote from the Epistle of James. Reread that quote now. In it, we find ample evidence that the early Christian community had a ceremony. Very similar to our current rite of the anointing of the sick. We should note two other significant things. First, this action of anointing the sick was performed by the official church through the presbyters (another term for priests). Therefore, these anointings may very well be considered sacraments.

Second, the anointing of the sick was connected to forgiveness of sin. In a sense this sacrament completes the sacrament of reconciliation. In a time of crisis, the person can rely on the church to offer prayer, love and the forgiveness of Christ. As a person prepares for possible death, a time of great loneliness, he or she can experience oneness with the Christian community as it offers strength and reconciliation.

B. Through the Ages.

First to fifth centuries. There is not much evidence discussing this sacrament in the early years. However, this much can be said:

- There was no formal rite.
- The oil was blessed by the official church and was used to anoint the sick. The theme of physical as well as spiritual healing was stressed.

Sixth to eighth centuries.

- Although the oil was blessed by bishops or priests (soon only by the bishop), laymen and laywomen sometimes took the oil home to use when they were sick and administered the sacrament themselves.

The oil was generously applied/...

Lesson Materials

SHORT HISTORY OF THE SACRAMENT (cont)

- The oil was generously applied to the ailing or injured part of the body. If the sick person had a more general illness, the head, breast or shoulders were anointed. If the theme of sin and forgiveness were to be stressed, the organs of the senses were anointed because these were considered the "gates of sin."

Middle Ages.

- The anointing became much more ritualised. Only priests were supposed to administer the anointings. This also meant that they had to be much more available to minister to the sick.
- The sacrament was associated more and more with those who were in extreme danger of death. As such, the sacrament was frequently called "extreme unction" (the last anointing) or by the term "sacrament of the departing." This association minimised the use of the sacrament for the sick as it was more and more reserved just for the dying.

Council of Trent to 20th century. The theology of this important council set the basic tone for the church's practice until recent "times. This theology is summarized here:

- Although the sacrament is discussed by Trent in the context of a dying Christian, the administration of the sacrament is *not* limited to those who are at the point of death.
- The sacrament has these purposes and effects:
 - Strengthens and comforts the sick person during the trials of illness.
 - Brings both spiritual and physical healing.
 - Wipes away sin.
- Finally, Trent teaches firmly that this anointing of the sick is truly a sacrament (against the Reformers who denied that it was) and that it is to be administered *only* by a priest.

LESSON 32: Signs and Symbols of Anointing



REFERENCE

Page 207 [THE SACRAMENTS OF HEALING]



WHAT YOU NEED

- (3) LSM: ‘Signs, Symbols, Effects’

AIM

- To deepen understanding of the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick through an examination of the signs and symbols used in the liturgical rite

OUTCOMES

- KUI Learners are familiar with the signs and symbols used in the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick and express their meaning clearly.

TEACHER’S NOTE

The purpose of this lesson is to deepen learners’ understanding of the signs and symbols used during the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. This is done in order to help learners appreciate and value the sacrament. Have all the material symbols necessary for the sacrament for this lesson. Seek help from the priest or catechist in this regard. If possible invite a priest or parish catechist to come and discuss this sacrament with the learners.

LESSON OUTLINE

1 Introduction

Begin this lesson by inviting a few learners to share a story from their lives – themselves, family, or friends – of people praying for healing, and the effects of the prayers on both the sick person and those who were praying for them. (This might introduce stories of miracle healings: just accept the contribution and move on.)

2 Dealing with Sickness

Ask the learners to suggest ways in which one can deal with sickness – a kind of change:

- One can fight it and try to undo it (physical recovery)
- One can adjust to it (peaceful, active acceptance when a physical cure is not given)

Discuss how the Sacrament of Anointing helps in both these ways.

3 Sign, Symbols and Effects

Ask learners what visible signs and symbols are used during the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.

Distribute the Lesson Materials page ‘Signs, Symbols, Effects’ to each learner. Ask them to look at the signs, symbols, and effects indicated there. You might like to arrange an enactment of the sacramental rite, with learners doing a commentary.

OTHER IDEAS

4 The Last Rites

Both the sick and the dying are anointed. In the second case, however, the Anointing of the Sick is preceded by the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and followed by Communion.

MATERIALS



LEARNER

Michael Burke. 1991. 'Sacrament of Anointing – signs, symbols, effects' 159 in *Connections*. Pietermaritzburg: Centaur Publications, p 139

Lesson Materials



Signs, Symbols, Effects

Have the students pay attention to the *signs & symbols* and the accompanying *effects* (this can be combined with the study of the text):

- the sickness /condition itself (indicating the weak and defenseless situation that is really ours, and reminding us that human life is fragile and that we should be prepared for our moment of death; the sickness is also a critical 'test of 'the sick person's faith in God)
- the gathering of fellow Christians for the Sacramental celebration (indicating that the Church is WITH the person in the time of trial - and in this is the presence and care of Christ)
- the Holy Water sometimes sprinkled (a link with our common Baptism)
- the imposition ('laying on') of hands (symbolising care and strengthening)
- the anointing with oil (symbolising Christ's power of healing and strengthening in every way that is really needed, e.g.
 - + emotional healing: extreme anxiety and loss of peace
 - + inner healing: from temptation, guilt, and wavering faith
 - + physical healing: if this is in the interests of the person's ultimate salvation ; note that physical healing often does follow the Sacrament, and this in itself is a sign of the Kingdom of God.The anointing also symbolises the consecration and sanctification of the suffering).
- the focus on both body and soul (signifying the Christian (w)holistic approach to the human being, and also indicating a recognition of the connection between sickness and sin - though not the false idea that an illness must mean a punishment from God).