

## Penance and Anointing of the Sick

**“Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest.”**

(Matthew 11:28)

**+ Leader:** Confident that Jesus loves each person, let us pray for those in need of his care.

**All:** Lord Jesus, you invite all who are burdened to come to you.  
Allow your healing hand to heal them.  
Touch our souls with your compassion for others;  
touch our hearts with your courage and infinite love for all;  
touch our minds with your wisdom,  
and may we always proclaim your praise.

Teach us to reach out to you in all our needs,  
and help us to lead others to  
you by our example.

(based on a prayer by the Sacred Heart Monastery  
in Hales Corners, Wisconsin)

**Leader:** Lord Jesus, you care for us. You share your healing power with us in the Sacraments of Penance and the Anointing of the Sick. May our hearts be healed through forgiveness, and may all who are ill be strengthened through prayer and anointing. We ask this with faith in you.

**All:** Amen.



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## The Big Question:

Who helps to heal me when I am suffering?



**Discover** a word that describes something people can do to promote healing. Here are some clues:

- The word is seven letters long.
- The first letter of the word can be found in the word *raffle* but not in the word *laughter*.
- The second letter can be found in *roman* but not in *manner*.
- The third letter can be found in *mentor* but not in *memento*.
- The fourth letter can be found in *elegant* but not in *elephant*.
- The fifth letter can be found in *interest* but not in *restaurant*.
- The sixth letter can be found in *vain* but not in *animal*.
- The seventh letter can be found in *pace* but not in *captor*.

The word is:

\_\_\_\_\_

**Answer:**  
forgive

**Discuss why it is important to forgive. How does forgiving someone promote healing?**

### In this chapter

we learn about the peace, healing, and forgiveness that are available to us in the Sacraments of Penance and Anointing of the Sick. Through this chapter, we hope



**to know** that Jesus Christ offers God's forgiveness and healing for all our sins and sufferings



**to appreciate** the healing power of Jesus Christ that we receive in the Sacraments of Healing through the Church



**to promote** healing, forgiveness, and reconciliation in the world around us.



**I** am a New York City Police Officer. On July 12, 1986, I was on patrol in Central Park and stopped to question three teenagers. While I was questioning them, the oldest, Shavod Jones, a fifteen-year-old, took out a gun and shot me in the head and neck.

"Thanks to the quick action of my fellow police officers, I was rushed to a hospital. Once it became clear I was going to survive, the surgeon came into my room and told my wife, Patti Ann, and me that I would be paralyzed from the neck down for the rest of my life. I was married just eight months, and my wife, twenty-three years old, was three months pregnant.

"Our faith suddenly became very important to us: the Catholic Mass, prayers, our need for God. It was God's love that put me back together. I spent the next eighteen months in the hospital. While I was there, my wife gave birth to our son, Connor. At his baptism, I told everyone I forgave the young teen who shot me.

"The only thing worse than a bullet in my spine would have been to nurture revenge in my heart. Such an attitude would have extended my tragic injury into my soul, hurting my wife, son, and others even more. It is bad enough that the physical effects are permanent, but at least I can choose to prevent spiritual injury.



"People often ask if I forgave Shavod right away, or if it took time. It has evolved over fourteen years. I think about it almost every day. I was angry at him but I was also puzzled, because I found I couldn't hate him. More often than not I felt sorry for him. I wanted him to find peace and purpose in his life. I wanted him to turn his life to helping and not hurting people. That's why I forgave him. It was also a way of moving on, a way of putting the terrible incident behind me." (excerpts from "Why I Forgave My Assailant," a speech by Detective Steven McDonald)

Detective Steven McDonald, confined to a wheelchair and a breathing machine, worked actively until his death in 2017 to ensure his story had an impact on all who need peace and reconciliation. He spoke to young people at school assemblies in the New York metropolitan area and traveled internationally to promote peacemaking.

**Activity** List some of the reasons that people forgive one another.

**"The message that God forgives has a prior condition: that we forgive those who have injured us," wrote Corrie ten Boom (1892–1983), who found healing even though she and her family were sent to Nazi concentration camps during World War II.**



## God is loving and forgiving.

Throughout the ages the prophets called people to live out their covenant with God. They called people to repentance and conversion. **Conversion** is turning back to God with all one's heart. Jesus too wanted people to turn away from sin and grow closer to God. And by the way that Jesus lived, he helped people to turn to God his Father. He showed them how to follow God's Law. He also taught that God loves and values all of us, even when we sin.

Every sin weakens our friendship with God. Less serious sin, **venial sin**, does not turn us completely away from God. But very serious sin, **mortal sin**, does completely turn us from God because it is a choice that we freely make to do something that we know is seriously wrong. Even if we commit serious sin, however, God never stops loving us, and he will always forgive us if we are truly sorry. Jesus used the following parable to teach us about this truth:

"A man had two sons, and the younger son said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of your estate that should come to me.' So the father divided the property between them. After a few days, the younger son collected all his belongings and set

off to a distant country where he squandered his inheritance on a life of dissipation. When he had freely spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he

found himself in dire need. So he hired himself out to one of the local citizens who sent him to his farm to tend the swine. And he longed to eat his fill of the pods on which the swine fed, but nobody gave him any. Coming to his senses he thought, 'How many of my father's hired workers have more than enough food to eat, but here am I, dying from hunger. I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as you would treat one of your hired workers."' So he got up and went back to his father. While he was still a long way off, his

### Faith Words

**conversion**  
**venial sin**  
**mortal sin**



father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him. His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son.' But his father ordered his servants, 'Quickly bring the finest robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Take the fattened calf and slaughter it. Then let us celebrate with a feast, because this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found.' Then the celebration began" (Luke 15:11–24).

Just as the younger son in this parable turned from his father, we sometimes turn from God our Father. Through this story Jesus taught us what we need to do to receive God's forgiveness in the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. Like the younger son in the parable, we must have sorrow, or *contrition*, for turning away from God and must tell God that we are sorry, or make a *confession*. By our words and actions we must also show that we are sorry, or do *penance*, and resolve to avoid sin in the future. Then, through the person of the priest, God grants us *absolution*—forgives us, and welcomes us back.

**Activity** Reread the parable, thinking of the father as representing God. How would you describe God, based on this parable? Share your response.



## We celebrate the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation.

Jesus not only spoke about God's mercy toward sinners; Jesus put God's mercy into action. As the Son of God, Jesus granted forgiveness to sinners as only God could do. Yet Jesus, also being human, like us in all ways but sin, knew our humanity. He knew that we had a need for continued spiritual healing and reconciliation. So, after his Death and Resurrection, Jesus Christ appeared to his Apostles and shared with them his authority to forgive sin:

"[Jesus] said to them . . . , 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained'" (John 20:21–23).

Jesus wanted all people to hear his call to conversion and to receive God's forgiveness. From the beginning of the Church, the Apostles continued Jesus' call to conversion. Through Baptism they granted God's forgiveness to those who believed.

Baptism frees us from Original Sin and any sins that we may have committed. Baptism begins our life anew. Yet, after Baptism, we sometimes make choices that do not show love for God, ourselves, and others. We do not follow our conscience. Our **conscience** is our ability to know the difference between good and evil, right and wrong. We sometimes turn from God and are again in need of his forgiveness. And just as he did more than two thousand years ago, Jesus continues to forgive those who are truly sorry. Jesus does this through the Church in the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. Priests are empowered

to forgive sins by the authority Christ bestows on them in the Sacrament of Holy Orders. And, in the Sacrament of Penance, the priest, in the name of Christ and the Church, and through the power of the Holy Spirit, grants the forgiveness of our sins.

Jesus said,  
"Peace be with you"  
(John 20:21).

In this sacrament our relationship with God and the Church is strengthened and restored.

The Sacrament of Penance is usually celebrated in one of two ways: an individual meets with a priest for the celebration (Rite of Reconciliation of Individual

Penitents), or a group gathers to celebrate the sacrament with one or more priests (Rite of Reconciliation of Several Penitents with Individual Confession and Absolution). Personal confession

of sins and individual absolution are always part of each of these rites. And "the sacrament of Penance is always, by its very nature, a liturgical action, and therefore an ecclesial and public action" (CCC, 1482). Through this Sacrament of Healing, we proclaim our faith in God's mercy, give thanks for the gift of forgiveness, and resolve to live more faithfully as Christ's disciples.

**Faith Word**  
conscience

**Activity** How will you show that, as Christ's disciple, you share in his mission of reconciliation?

## God gives us peace

**T**he Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation has been called the sacrament of conversion, of Penance, of confession, of forgiveness, and of Reconciliation. This sacrament has four main parts:

- **contrition**, a heartfelt sorrow for sins, with a desire to sin no more
- **confession**, the act of telling our sins to the priest, thus acknowledging our responsibility for our actions and expressing our desire for God's forgiveness. The priest is bound by the *seal of confession* to never reveal what is confessed.
- **penance**, specific prayer or acts of service that the priest will tell us to do in order to repair the harm caused by sin and to reestablish good habits
- **absolution**, which takes place when, through the person of the priest, God forgives us our sins, or *absolves* us.

Through this powerful Sacrament of Healing, God gives us his peace, and we are reconciled to God and the Church.

**CATHOLIC IDENTITY**





## Jesus comforts all who are in need.

*How can we cope with suffering and sickness?*

Jesus' healing power was a sign that in him God's Kingdom had begun. And since Jesus wanted all people to experience God's power and presence in their lives, he shared his ministry with his Apostles. Jesus sent them out to share the message of the Kingdom of God. They traveled throughout the land, teaching and healing in Jesus' name. "They anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them."

(Mark 6:13) After Jesus' Death and Resurrection, Jesus told the Apostles that one of the signs that would "accompany those who believe" was that they would "lay hands on the sick, and they will recover" (Mark 16:17, 18).

While all of the sacraments bring us closer to God and one another, the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick celebrates in a special way Jesus' work of healing. And from the time of the Apostles, faithful believers have turned to the Church for this healing and comfort. In fact, in Saint James's writing to one of the early Christian communities about the need for healing, we can see the beginnings of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. James said that anyone who is suffering should pray. Anyone who is sick should call on the priests of the Church, "and they should pray over him and anoint [him] with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up" (James 5:14-15).

As all sacraments, the Anointing of the Sick is a celebration of the whole Church community. Recalling that Jesus saves us by his suffering, Death, and Resurrection, the community asks God, in this Sacrament of Healing, to save those who are suffering. The priest who administers the sacrament

and those gathered represent the whole Church, offering comfort and support to those who are sick and encouraging them. This message of hope and support is also for people who care for those who are sick, especially for their families and friends.

The Church encourages its members to welcome the grace of this sacrament. Thus, in times of serious sickness, children, adults, and the elderly are all invited to be strengthened by God's grace in the Anointing of the Sick. This sacrament is meant to

help people in living their faith during times of suffering and so can be celebrated more than once—as determined by each person's needs.

Many parishes offer a communal celebration of the Anointing of the Sick at Mass. However, this sacrament is often celebrated in hospitals, in homes, at the site of an accident, or wherever someone is in need of it.

Whenever possible, friends and family members should be present for the celebration, supporting those who are ill and continuing Jesus' saving work of healing.



**Activity** With your group list some people in your family or community who are suffering from a serious illness. Together pray for these people. Then design get-well cards to send to them.



## We celebrate the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.

In the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, God's grace and comfort are given to those seriously ill or suffering because of their old age. They receive strength, peace, and courage to face the difficulties that come from serious illness or old age.

The grace of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick may even restore to physical health those who are ill. But for all those who receive this sacrament, it:

- renews their trust and faith in God
- unites them to Christ and to his suffering
- prepares them, when necessary, for death and the hope of life forever with God.

Since the Anointing of the Sick often takes place outside the celebration of the Mass, the sacrament usually begins with the Liturgy of the Word and is followed by Holy Communion. In this way those being anointed are further strengthened and nourished by the Word of God and by the Body and Blood of Christ. Holy Communion also joins them to their parish community with whom they are unable to celebrate the Eucharist.

### THE MAIN PARTS OF THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK

**The Prayer of Faith:** The whole Church is represented by the priest, family, friends, and other parish members gathered to pray. Trusting in God's mercy, they ask for help for those who are sick. Several intentions are offered. After each one, those present answer, "Lord, have mercy." (Rite of Anointing of the Sick)

**The Laying on of Hands:** In silence the priest lays his hands on the person who is sick. The priest's laying on of hands is a sign of blessing and a calling of the Holy Spirit upon the person.

**The Anointing with Oil:** Using the Oil of the Sick, the priest anoints the person's forehead first, saying, "Through this holy anointing may the Lord in his love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit."  
Response: "Amen." (Rite of Anointing of the Sick)

Then the priest anoints the person's hands, saying, "May the Lord who frees you from sin save you and raise you up."  
Response: "Amen." (Rite of Anointing of the Sick)

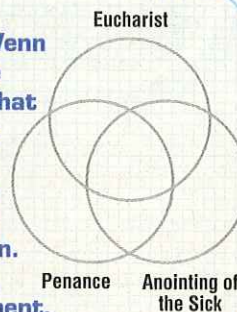
**"And the prayer of faith will save the sick person."**

(James 5:15)

As those who are very ill approach the hour of death, they are given the Body of Christ in the Eucharist as *viaticum*, or "food for the journey." Viaticum strengthens those who are dying as they prepare for death and the hope of eternal life. Receiving the Body of Christ, they can be encouraged, for Jesus said, "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day" (John 6:54).

When the Sacraments of Penance, Anointing of the Sick, and the Eucharist as *viaticum* are celebrated together, they are called the "last sacraments." Through these sacraments, Jesus helps us to recognize that suffering and death are only temporary experiences on the path toward eternal happiness with God.

**Activity** Enlarge this Venn diagram: in the larger outside section of the circles, fill in what is specific to that sacrament; in the overlapping sections what each set of sacraments has in common; in the center what all three have in common. Some possible entries: grace, healing, forgiveness, nourishment.



## Holy oils

**E**ach year at the Chrism Mass, a special Mass held before Easter, the bishop of each diocese blesses oil that will be used for anointing in sacraments in the diocese. The Chrism Mass is usually held in the diocesan cathedral. Three types of oils are blessed:

- the Oil of Catechumens, which is used to anoint people in preparation for Baptism
- the Oil of the Sick, which is used to anoint people in the Anointing of the Sick
- the Sacred Chrism, a fragrant oil used to anoint in Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders. Each parish will receive a supply of these oils following the Mass.

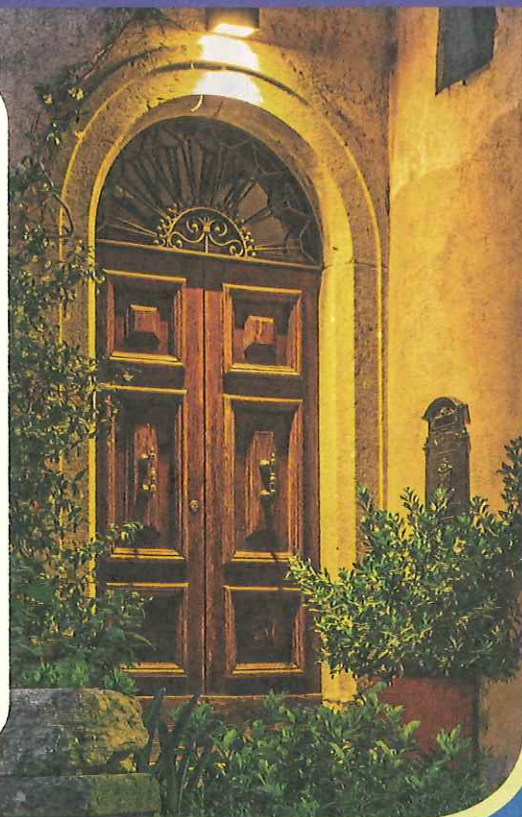
Describe how the anointing that takes place in the Anointing of the Sick is similar to or different from the anointings that you learned about in Chapter 14 and Chapter 15.



# RESPONDING...

## Recognizing Our Faith

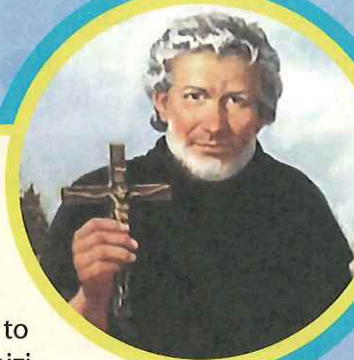
Recall the question at the beginning of this chapter: *Who helps to heal me when I am suffering?* What was your answer? Now turn the question around: *Whom do I help to heal when they are suffering?* Reflect for a few moments on the ways you may have promoted, and can continue to promote, the healing of others.



## Living Our Faith

Frequent confession strengthens our relationship with Christ and the Church. Make an effort to receive the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation on a regular basis.

## Saint Peregrine



As a young man in Italy in the thirteenth century, Peregrine Laziosi belonged to a political group that was against the Church and the pope. During one political rally he angrily struck the face of a priest who belonged to an order known as the Servites. This priest, now known as Saint Philip Benizi, prayed for Peregrine instead of striking back at him. This merciful act changed Peregrine's outlook on life. He sought forgiveness and also eventually became a Catholic. In an attempt to do penance for his old ways, he vowed to "stand up" and serve God and the Church as a Servite. During his years of service he experienced the healing of a cancerous condition in his leg, a recovery for which he was grateful to God.

## Partners in FAITH

Saint Peregrine is the patron saint of cancer patients. His feast day is May 1. The Servites continue the work of Saint Peregrine. One way they serve is by working to help seriously ill people and their caregivers to find healing, support, peace, and God in their daily lives.

In what way can you offer support to someone in need of healing?



## Putting Faith to Work

Talk about what you have learned in this chapter:



**We know** that Jesus Christ offers God's forgiveness and healing for all our sins and sufferings.



**We appreciate** the healing power of Jesus Christ that we receive in the Sacraments of Healing through the Church.

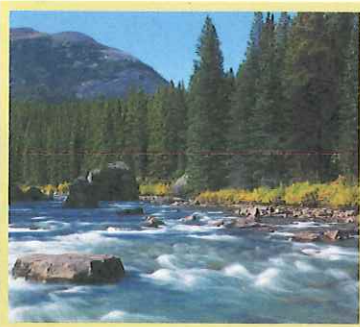


**We promote** healing, forgiveness, and reconciliation in the world around us.

Decide on ways to live out what you have learned.



## ENCOUNTERING GOD'S WORD



**“Gracious is the LORD and just; yes, our God is merciful. I shall walk before the Lord in the land of the living.”**

(Psalm 116:5, 9)

- ➔ **READ** the quotation from Scripture.
- ➔ **REFLECT** on the following question:  
Can you recall a time when God was merciful to you?
- ➔ **SHARE** your reflections with a partner.
- ➔ **DECIDE** to thank God for his mercy now and always.  
You might wish to pray the first two lines of the Scripture quotation as a prayer of thanksgiving.

### Complete the following paragraph.

Jesus taught us what we need to do to receive God's forgiveness in the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. We must have sorrow, or \_\_\_\_\_ (1), for turning away from God and must tell God that we are sorry, or make a \_\_\_\_\_ (2). By our words and actions we must also show that we are sorry, or do \_\_\_\_\_ (3), and resolve to avoid sin in the future. Then, through the person of the priest, God grants us \_\_\_\_\_ (4) —forgives us, and welcomes us back.

### Short Answers

5. What are the main parts of the Anointing of the Sick? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What is viaticum? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Which sacraments, when celebrated together, are called the “last sacraments”? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Explain what conversion is. \_\_\_\_\_

**9–10. ESSAY:** How are the Sacraments of Penance and Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick related?

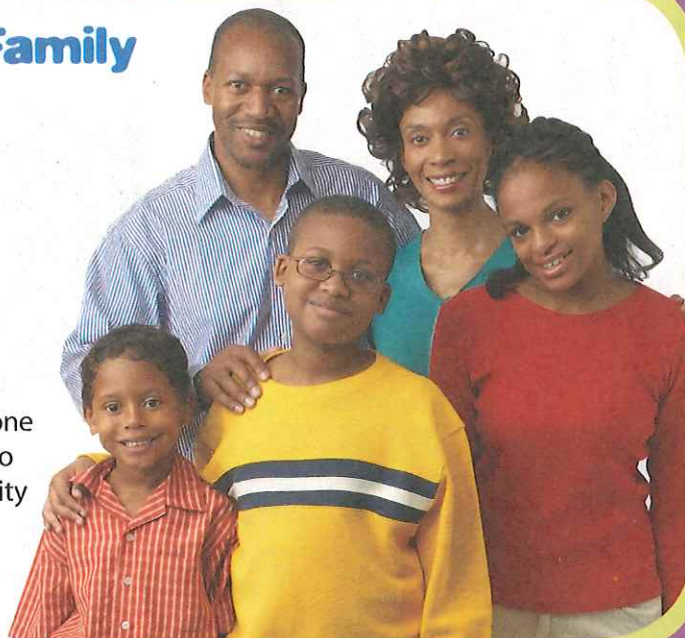


## Sharing Faith with Your Family

Discuss the following with your family:

- God is loving and forgiving.
- We celebrate the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation.
- Jesus comforts all who are in need.
- We celebrate the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.

This week, before sharing a meal together, think of something for which you need forgiveness or someone you need to forgive, and invite each family member to do the same. Then think of all those in the community and world who need God's healing. Pray together that God's forgiveness and healing will touch all those who need them, including your family.



## The Worship Connection

At every Mass we pray for people in the Church who are sick or who have died. Remember in silent prayer people in your own life who are sick or whose lives on earth have come to an end.

## More to Explore

Many parishes hold communal celebrations of the Anointing of the Sick. Find out when your parish or one nearby will hold one of these. How can your group help with the celebration?

## Catholic Social Teaching Checklist

### Theme of Catholic Social Teaching:

Life and Dignity of the Human Person

**How it relates to Chapter 17:** All human beings have human dignity because they are created in God's image and redeemed by Jesus Christ. All people have the right to life, healing, and compassion. As Catholics we respect and promote this right.

### How can you do this?

☐ At home:

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☐ At school/work:

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☐ In the parish:

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☐ In the community:

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Check off each action after it has been completed.