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The Anointing of the Sick sacrament has four steps: reading of scripture, thanksgiving over the oil, laying on of hand, and anointing.  Most people are also not aware that in the beginning of this rite there is forgiveness of sin (absolution). These characteristics make the sacrament unique. But this sacrament is special for many more reasons. First off, it is an optional sacrament. A person does not necessarily need to receive this sacrament like one needs baptism. For another, it can be embedded in another ritual. The Anointing of the Sick is often times administered at the same time as Last Rites, however they are two separate things. A person does not have to be dying to receive the Anointing of the Sick. A person who is going to have surgery, someone experiencing mental conditions such as depression or anxiety, or someone recovering from physical ailments such as broken bones or skin conditions are all just as able to receive this sacrament as is someone who has cancer, ALS, MS, Parkinson’s, Alzheimer’s, Huntington’s, or any other chronic/terminal disease. Another unique feature of this sacrament is that it is given for one reason, but is sometimes effective in another way. A person receives the Anointing of the Sick to unify their suffering with Christ’s, to get spiritual strengthening to endure the suffering, and for forgiveness of sin. However, it is not uncommon to hear of someone receiving actual physical healing along with the reception of this sacrament. This happens when it is conducive to the recipient’s soul for salvation. Finally, this sacrament is one of the few that you can receive more than once. You can be anointed for various illnesses, if an illness recurs or gets progressively worse, or as one ages and suffers its effects.

I have received the Anointing of the Sick twice in my life. The first time was shortly after I had received my diagnosis of thyroid cancer. I did have surgery and follow-up treatment, however I can honestly say that I never once feared that I would die. I had one day that I had one, single tear roll down my face, but that was the only time I had any concern during the entire illness. I’m convinced that a large part of my peace came from receiving this sacrament. The second time I received this sacrament was just last fall before I went in for my ulcer surgery. I did end up having some complications, but again, I was totally at peace throughout it all. And in the end, all is fine now.

If you know you are going to have surgery or have any type of chronic illness, I highly encourage you to speak to a priest to request the Anointing of the Sick. Peace of mind can go a long way in helping you endure your suffering or to bring about physical healing. Sanctifying grace is conferred through this sacrament. That’s far better than anything medicine can provide.

 Blessings,

 Julie Gould

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This Week:

* Sunday, Feb. 10, 4-6 pm at Fellowship Hall: Faith Formation classes
* Monday, Feb. 11, 7 pm at St. Francis de Sales Church, Lakeview: Adult Enrichment Class