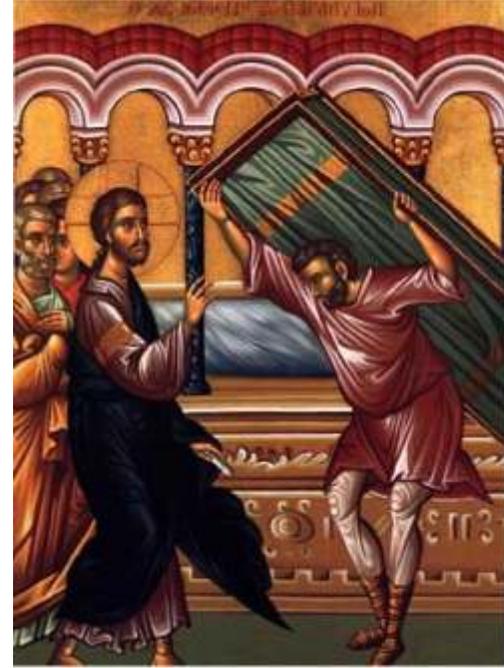


CELEBRATING
THE HEALING MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH
St Martin Roath



The Parish
of Roath Saint Martin of Tours
Albany Road Roath Cardiff

In his ministry Jesus showed God's love and mercy at work by making people whole, so prayer for wholeness and healing I at the heart of the Church's prayer to. God always hears our prayer and answers in many ways and in ways that we do not always expect. Our wholeness is bound up with our salvation and this is a sign of God's new creation.

The Paschal Mystery of the Lord is at the heart of salvation - that is the great mystery of Christ, the eternal Son of the Father, who became man, a human being, born of Mary, who died and rose again. All things have been restored in him and through him. In him we find life, health, wholeness, in other words Salvation.

As St. Paul said: If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation. The old has passed away: behold the new has come.

2 Corinthians 5: 17

Bless the Lord, O my soul and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all our sins and heals all our infirmities, who redeems our life from the Pit and crowns us with love and compassion

From Psalm 103

Jesus said, 'Come to me, all who labour and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.'

Matthew 11: 28-30

Some Prayers

For the Sick

Merciful Jesus, during Your life on earth You showed great concern for the sick and the infirm. Have compassion now on all those who are sick or in pain. Grant them a healing of mind and body and restore their strength and spirit. Amen

Prayers for Healing

Lord Jesus, You know how I feel today, my secret fears and pains. I pray for healing in whatever way You know will help me. I trust in Your power. You proclaimed God's reign by curing the sick, comforting and strengthening those who were sad, and giving new freedom to all who accepted You. Guide also, those who help in Your healing work: doctors, nurses, chaplains, and all who extend Your care. Together we do the work of Your Father. We pray in Your Spirit, Lord Jesus. Amen.

Lord, look upon me with eyes of mercy, may your healing hand rest upon me, may your lifegiving powers flow into every cell of my body and into the depths of my soul, cleansing, purifying, restoring me to wholeness and strength for service in your Kingdom. Amen.

Lord, You invite all who are burdened to come to You. Allow Your healing hand to heal me. Touch my soul with Your compassion for others. Touch my heart with Your courage and infinite love for all. Touch my mind with Your wisdom, that my mouth may always proclaim Your praise. Teach me to reach out to You in my need, and help me to lead others to You by my example. Most loving Heart of Jesus, bring me health in body and spirit that I may serve You with all my strength. Touch gently this life which You have created, now and forever. Amen.

Throughout our lives

Jesus loves us into health and wholeness, this is part of what we mean by 'salvation'

At the heart of the Christian life are those encounters with the risen Lord, in silence and prayer, in word and sacrament, in sickness and in health. The Healing Sacraments of the Church are there for us at every stage of our lives and particularly when life is diminished by sickness, fear and anxiety.

The anointing of the sick is available for us whenever our health is seriously impaired by sickness or old age. God is the God of our journey, a journey that itself began for us in Baptism. He is always with us in the journey, encouraging us a little further along the way. When for many reasons we stop, cannot go further, when we fall down and sense we have no more strength or confidence to get up and continue - God comes to us where we are - as he has always done.

In the Sacrament of the Sick he comes to us and gives us new strength, binds our wounds and sets us once again on our path.

We celebrate the Sacrament of the Sick at least once a month during the evening Mass on a Monday. However, this sacrament is available at anytime for any who come seeking God's healing love.

During this particular celebration others are encouraged to come along and pray with and for those who are sick. This is a ministry of witness to God's healing mercy and one that all can participate in. In many ways we are all sick and become well, we are well and become sick.

Encourage and pray for each other, up build one another in love and faith. Let not our prayer for those in need be made empty by our neglect of the very needs that diminish others for whom we pray.

The Healing Ministry is:

Visionary - because it beckons us towards the future and a glimpse of the Kingdom, and the hope of the whole creation renewed.

Prophetic - because it calls us to reconsider our relationship with God, each other and the world and to seek forgiveness and a new start in our lives.

Dynamic - because Jesus Christ is with us to the end of time: He is present to us as physician and healer. We encounter him as the Risen Lord whatever our own particular situation and he encounters us where we are.

The Church's ministry is a continuation of the ministry of Jesus. We seek in all things the grace of the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life so that we may live. In turn we are called to do everything in our power to enable others to live. We are called to be whole ourselves, to bring healing to our relationships and to have a care and responsibility for the environment and the places where others live work and recreate.

What are the most common forms of the healing ministry?

Common and personnel prayer of intercession

Christian worship has always included prayers of intercession. This intercession is made for all kinds of situations in which human beings find themselves. Intercession is made not so much to change God's mind about something or someone - but more so, to simply bring that situation into the presence of the Lord. It leads us to seek to co-operate with the Divine Will in all things and shows our dependence upon God the Creator.

On the Parish weekly news sheet, are printed each week, a list of those people who are asking our intercession. We remember these people before God in prayer personnel prayer each day as well as during the common or corporate prayer of the Church during the Liturgy.

The Laying on of hands

Actions can speak louder than words and touch conveys a message of love and assurance. The gentle laying on of hands on persons head with often silent prayer links us with Christ's apostolic command to heal the sick. This form of prayer for the healing of a person can make that person often less fearful or alone in their time of sickness and need.

We seek healing from all sorts of conditions and situations - Healing is so much more than *making better* - it is seeking for wholeness in our entire person. Healing is also more than a return to what we were before. It's a new stage on our journey. Sometimes healing comes in a direct way and we find ourselves well again. At other times we are given the grace and strength to cope with a situation. Again, sometimes we are led to accept, especially in the case of some serious or terminal illness that death is going to be the natural end to this sickness. As Christians we know that death does not have the final word and therefore we do not fear it. However, the process of dying can be a most fearful and difficult time for ourselves and those near us. We can and do ask for the healing grace of God so that we die in faith, hope and peace.

From the earliest times, the sacrament of the anointing of the sick was cherished among Christians, not only in immediate danger of death, but even at the beginning sign of danger from illness or old age. A sermon of Caesar of Arles (ca. AD. 470-542) contains the following:

"As often as some infirmity overtakes a man, let him who is ill receive the body and blood of Christ; let him humbly and in faith ask the presbyters for blessed oil, to anoint his body, so that what was written may be fulfilled in him: 'Is anyone among you sick? Let him bring in the presbyters, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he be in sins, they will be forgiven him. . . . See to it, brethren, that whoever is ill hasten to the church, both that he may receive health of body and will merit to obtain the forgiveness of his sins'" (Sermons 13[325]:3).

The Sacrament of Reconciliation

Through the celebration of this healing Sacrament we are renewed and recommitted to being open to the action of the Holy Spirit in our lives in helping us to become more fully human. Confession, part of this sacrament, is about holiness and wholeness. Wholeness and holiness are very closely connected. Real wholeness means developing all the bits of you, but in the proper function - that includes all those bits we call sins! God created us, and his promise is not to destroy parts of us, but rather to restore and recreate us to be more fully and more richly ourselves.

There is another Booklet dealing directly with this sacrament which you may find of some further help.

Even though we must face a certain amount of suffering and affliction in this life, we know God's grace is sufficient to sustain us. All of God's graces, including physical health, are bestowed to lead to the salvation of our souls. We believe that God loves us and will the very best for us. But we know that suffering of all kinds and ultimately death are conditions from which we cannot escape. But God is not distant. In Jesus he shared our life our suffering and death. Through his Paschal Mystery he has overcome all that can diminish us and that includes our death. St Paul reminds us when he writes to the Corinthian Church that *"as in Adam all die, even so, in Christ shall all be made alive"*

The "Last Rites"

Though the psalmist teaches us to ponder our mortality, he immediately comforts us by saying, "But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon those who fear him, and his righteousness to children's children, to those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments" (Ps. 103:17-18).

In his steadfast love for us, the Lord gives us the sacraments involved in the last rites to comfort us in our final days and prepare us for the journey ahead. "This includes the anointing of the sick . . . and Viaticum (which is meant to be the last reception of Communion for the journey from this life to eternity) . . .

The most important part of the last rites is the reception of the Lord in one's final Communion, also called "Viaticum" (Latin = that which you take on the road, i.e., provisions for a journey) This special Communion prepares us to travel with the Lord on the final part of our journey.

The comfort of Viaticum has been valued by Christians since the beginning of Church history. The first ecumenical council, held at Nicaea in 325, decreed: "Concerning the departing, the ancient canonical law is still to be maintained, to wit, that, if any man be at the point of death, he must not be deprived of the last and most indispensable Viaticum" (canon 13). Having repented of our sins and received reconciliation, we travel with the Lord Jesus out of this earthly life and to eternal happiness with him in heaven.

The Sacrament of the Sick

This Sacrament used to be called Extreme Unction and was associated with impending death. For that reason some people avoid sending for the Priest when a relative or friend is ill in case the sick person is frightened by the appearance of the Priest with the Holy Oils. This should not be so. The anointing of a sick person is a sign of God's, and the Church's, love and concern for the person in their particular need and so when someone is ill then please send for the Priest so that he can come and celebrate the Sacrament of the Sick with the sick person for their comfort and strengthening.

From time to time we celebrate this Sacrament publicly in the church and in the context of Mass, which in itself underlines that this is not some dramatic last minute affair. People are encouraged to be present whether sick or not. If we are in need of God's healing grace then this is a good place to be - also to show our love and concern for the Sick as the Church - this is a good place to be.

When the Church cares for the sick, it serves Christ Himself in the suffering members of his Mystical Body, the Church. The 'anointing of the sick' is one of the sacraments instituted by Jesus Christ. The sick person is anointed on the forehead and the hands with the formula.

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

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

Like all the sacraments, holy anointing was instituted by Jesus Christ during his earthly ministry. It is alluded to indeed by Mark, but is recommended to the faithful and promulgated by James the apostle and brother of the Lord.

The anointing of the sick conveys several graces and imparts gifts of strengthening in the Holy Spirit against anxiety, discouragement, and temptation, and conveys peace and fortitude. These graces flow from the atoning death of Jesus Christ, for "this was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah, 'He took our infirmities and bore our diseases'" (Matt. 8:17).

Mark refers to the sacrament when he recounts how Jesus sent out the twelve disciples to preach, and "they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them" (Mark 6:13). In his epistle, James says,

"Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven" (Jas. 5:14–15).

The early Church Fathers recognized this sacrament's role in the life of the Church. Around AD. 250, Origen wrote that the penitent Christian "does not shrink from declaring his sin to a priest of the Lord and from seeking medicine . . . [of] which the apostle James says: 'If then there is anyone sick, let him call the presbyters of the Church, and let them impose hands upon him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him'" (Homilies on Leviticus 2:4).

In the year 350, Bishop Serapion wrote, "We beseech you, Saviour of all men, you that have all virtue and power, Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and we pray that you send down from heaven the healing power of the only-begotten [Son] upon this oil, so that for those who are anointed . . . it may be effected for the casting out of every disease and every bodily infirmity . . . for good grace and remission of sins . . ." (The Sacramentary of Serapion 29:1).

The Sacrament's Effects

"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. This sacrament of the Church conveys a healing grace - it is a direct link with Risen Christ. It is an occasion to place ourselves in the healing presence of Jesus. To find ourselves being touched deeply within, as the Holy Spirit renews and heals us at a level beyond what we can often understand.

Does God Always Heal?

Today some Christians go to extremes in their expectation of divine healing. On one hand, some say that if a Christian is not healed of all his diseases, this reflects his lack of faith. Others claim that divine healings were only for the apostolic age, when all diseases were healed instantly and automatically. Both extremes are wrong.

God does not always heal the physical infirmities that afflict us. Paul preached to the Galatians while he was afflicted by a "bodily ailment" (Gal. 4:13–14). He also mentions that he had to leave his companion Trophimus in the town of Miletus because he was too sick to travel (2 Tim. 4:20). In his first letter to Timothy, Paul urges his young protégé to "no longer drink only water, but to use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments" (1 Tim. 5:23).

The last passage is especially informative. Not only does it reveal that illnesses were not always healed in the apostolic age, but it also shows an apostle's practical advice to a fellow Christian on how to deal with an illness. Notice that Paul does not tell Timothy to pray harder and have more faith that God will heal him from his stomach ailment. Rather, he tells him how to manage the illness through medicinal means.

Some argue that healings were always instantaneous and were only for those living during the apostolic age, but that afterward the gift of healing disappeared. The problem with that theory is that the Bible tells us otherwise. For example, when Jesus healed the blind man at Bethsaida, he laid his hands upon him twice before the man was fully healed (Mark 8:22–26).

Finally, we have a standing command of the New Testament in James 5:14–15, cited earlier. This command is never revoked anywhere in the Bible, and there are no statements anywhere that God will cease to heal. Thus the command is in effect to this very day.

Of course, our healing, like all things, is subject to God's will. As James pointed out just a chapter earlier, "You do not know about tomorrow. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we shall live and we shall do this or that'" (Jas. 4:14–15.) We have a promise of healing, but not an unqualified one. It is conditional on the will of God.