

13—Healing: Regaining Strength for the Journey

Objectives

By the end of this lesson students will be able to ...

- identify spiritual infirmities as pains within us that keep us from following God's path.
- state that our Church offers help to the suffering through prayers and the Mystery of Oil Anointing.
- understand that God listens to our prayers and answers them even when we do not receive the answer we want.

For the Catechists

The Mystery of the Anointing of the Sick is a sign of our identification with Christ; therefore, in a crisis such as illness, we ask for anointing because our strength and hope is in the Lord. In the past many people waited too long for the Mystery of Anointing. They saw it as a religious ritual for when they were dying. Instead, it is a proclamation of Christ in the face of all evil, spiritual and physical. That is the focus of this lesson. Students are asked to realize that God is with us and offers us strength during difficult times.

Our Church gives us the Mysteries to encounter Christ and ways to experience this encounter. During the Mystery of Anointing of the Sick, we are blessed with oil. Oil at one time was used for cleaning, as a salve for healing, as a perfume, and as a liniment for relaxing the muscles. Actually, it is still in many salves which are oil-based. Also, the old Greek word for olive oil has the same root as the word mercy. Olive oil was used extensively as a soothing agent for bruises and minor wounds. The oil was poured onto the wound and gently massaged in, thus soothing, comforting and making whole the injured part. Appropriately, oil is used as the medicine of the Holy Spirit. In the Mystery of Anointing, the person feels the oil used during the blessing as he or she hears the comforting prayers reminding him or her that God is there. Help the students realize that prayers and the Mystery of Anointing are part of the healing process.

Students might ask why God does not answer all prayers. (Each of us probably knows of a person who did not get better even though people were praying.) This question gives you the opportunity to discuss the mystery of our faith. Tell them that God is able to see the past, present, and future, and He knows what is best for all of us. Because we can only live in the present, we are not able to realize why our prayers were not answered in the way we thought. We are seeing the situation from our perspective and the way we will be affected. God sees the person on his or her way to salvation, and He knows what is best. That is the reason we pray for God's will to be done. Encourage the students to keep praying because prayers help us feel God's presence during difficult times.

Materials Needed

Opening Prayer: "We have seen the true Light"

Icon: The Descent into Hades (*Come Bless the Lord* icon packet #13).

Closing Prayer: "The Prayer for the Sick"—in the student book

Pens, pencils, markers and white paper

1. Opening Prayer

Chant or recite "We have seen the true Light."

[Find this prayer in the Divine Liturgy books in your church. This prayer is sung after the priest gives the blessing after everyone has received Holy Eucharist.]

2. Introduction

Discuss some of the physical problems people have. Then lead into a discussion about spiritual problems—anger, despair, loneliness. What can we do for people with problems?

3. Guided Reading

- Before the reading, review last week's objectives. Then summarize this week's objectives of the lesson on a wall pad or easel pad to use for review next week.
- Have students read text aloud and emphasize the importance of recognizing the importance of prayer.
- Give students time to complete the personal journal. Do not ask them to share.

4. Scriptural Reflection

- Read James 5:13-16
- Before reading aloud, have students make the sign of the cross. Remind them that reading Scripture is praying.
- Ask the students to focus on the icon for one minute before the reading.
- Give the students 3 minutes to answer the questions and read the passage again.
- Ask the students to work in groups of 2 and share their answers
- Possible answers:
 - Pray
 - Sing praise
 - The priest for the Mystery of Anointing

Background Reading (Union With God)

"For us to be anointed, therefore, is to identify us with Christ. At Baptism, we are anointed with holy chrism, which is basically olive oil to which many fragrances are added to symbolize the multitude of gifts bestowed through the Holy Spirit. When we are anointed with this chrism, which is solemnly consecrated only by a bishop, we receive the Gift of the same Holy Spirit that 'anointed' Jesus at His Baptism. We become Christians and the rite of initiation is often called a Christening, referring not to a bestowal of a name, but to being given the name of Christ, at which 'every knee must bend in the heavens, on the earth, and under the earth, and every tongue proclaim to the glory of God the Father: Jesus Christ is Lord!' (Phil 2:10-11)" (*Journey TM 200*).

5. From the Teaching of the Church Fathers

- Ask one student to read the words from The Way of the Ascetics.
- Possible answers:
Oil
Mirovaniya, Chrismation
Oil—through Chrismation and Anointing—through the Holy Spirit

6. Liturgical Study

- Read the paragraphs aloud.
- Ask the students to explain everything that occurs during the Mystery of Oil Anointing.

7. Closing Prayers

"The Prayer for the Sick"—in the student book

Supplemental Activities:

Review—At the end of the lesson, ask the students what they remember by using one of the following suggestions:

1. Write a one-page manual identifying what you should do if someone is suffering an infirmity. Add prayers and include the priest's phone number to call for the Mystery of the Anointing of the Sick.
2. Ask your priest for the names of parishioners who are unable to go to church. Write and send notes and cards to tell them that the class is praying for them.
3. Make a list of the shut-ins and add a prayer for them at the beginning or end of class.
4. Interview each other and ask how would knowing that people are praying for you makes you feel.
5. If you know of someone who has recovered from an illness, interview them and ask how prayers helped. (Many people who have recovered want to share the power of the prayers said for them.)

Background Reading (Chrismation)

"The apostolic tradition affirms that each believer is called to be a temple of the Spirit. This is why the newly-baptized receive the gift of the Spirit in the mystery of chrismation. In this sacrament the believer is anointed with myron (olive oil mixed with many fragrances) on several parts [all the senses—eyes, ears, nose, forehead, lips, hands, and feet] of the body. The multitude of fragrances symbolizes the variety of gifts of the Spirit, and the different anointing symbolize that the faithful Christian receives the Spirit for all the needs of life. St. Simeon of Thessalonica remarked that in this mystery the baptized and chrismated person received all the divine gifts, except holy priesthood (*On the Holy Mysteries* 66, PG 155, 229). Thus the whole Church is built up by this diversity of gifts which are received by the new member of the Body of Christ. Through these gifts of the Holy Spirit, the individual person is joined uniquely to the Body as an integral part to assist in its growth and perfection" (*LLI* 74-75).

Unit 3 Review

Lesson 11:

- 1) Define sin. (*When we turn off the path to life with God, we sin. We put our idea of what will give us life ahead of what God knows gives us life.*)
- 2) Why do we say "Lord, have mercy" so many times during the Divine Liturgy? (*With these words we acknowledge that God is the Lord, and we are the servants who stand in need.*)

Lesson 12:

- 3) Define repentance? (The process of turning from sin to God)
- 4) Through the Mystery of Repentance, we are forgiven by God. Also, we are brought back to union with _____ and _____ (*God and His Church, the people.*)

Lesson 13:

- 5) What is the Mystery of the Anointing of the Sick? (*A solemn prayer for healing*)
- 6) The word "Christ" is the Greek form of what Hebrew word? (*Messiah*)

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