

My Catholic Worship! Study Group

Session 5 - The Sacraments of Healing

Pre-meeting Prep

Participants should be asked to read Chapters Six and Seven of the *My Catholic Worship!* book prior to this meeting.

5 minutes - Gather

Snacks and informal social time as people arrive. Try to be punctual and gather everyone together no longer than 5 minutes after the scheduled starting time.

5-10 minutes - Opening prayer and Scripture

Everyone sits quietly as the leader begins with the Sign of the Cross and then invites a period of silence in the following way:

"Let us quiet ourselves as we begin this study of our glorious Catholic worship together. 'Lord, as we sit here for a minute in silence, help each one of us to bring our own questions, concerns, fears, and joys to You. Help us, in this moment of silence, to be attentive to Your gentle voice speaking to us, directing us, and calling us to a deeper faith.'"

Take about a minute in silence with eyes closed so that each person can speak to our Lord about their own particular cares and concerns.

Leader reads the following invitation:

Let us ponder the Word of God. Let us reflect upon our own faith journey with the following questions: Do I believe? How deep is my faith? Am I open to letting God speak to me? Am I open to the Word of God and willing to let God's truth sink in more deeply? Am I willing to let this new faith change my life?

The leader of the session prayerfully reads the following Scriptures, one at a time, pausing for about 30 seconds between each verse:

Isaiah 1:18: Come now, let us set things right, says the LORD: Though your sins be like scarlet, they may become white as snow; Though they be crimson red, they may become white as wool.

John 20:21-23: Jesus said to them again, "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."

Luke 15:21-24: 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.

Mark 6:13: They drove out many demons, and they anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

James 5:14-15: Is any among you sick? Let him call for the presbyters 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.

Colossians 1:24: Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the Church.

Leader then says: ***Let us take a moment in silence to reflect upon these words.*** (a minute of silence)

The Leader invites everyone to pray quietly as the leader prays the following prayer out loud:

Lord our God, You are the merciful Father, You are the God of compassion and forgiveness. You are the Good Shepherd who always seeks out His straying sheep.

Help us to always be aware of Your mercy and forgiveness in our lives. Help us to always trust in Your unwavering compassion.

Lord, we are sinners. Help us to see our sin and to humbly acknowledge it to You. Help us to trust in that mercy as it is given through the Sacraments of Confession and Anointing of the Sick.

Lord, when we suffer in body and soul, help us to also unite our sufferings to You and Your Cross. May we become a sacrificial gift to You and a source of grace for others.

The prayer time concludes with everyone professing the Apostles' Creed:

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord: Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

45-50 minutes - Discussion questions

Each person should be invited to share something or ask a question if he/she chooses to regarding the questions/discussion starters below. Go through one question at a time, and give each person an opportunity to say something if he/she chooses. Avoid having one or two persons dominate the discussion. Go around the circle and do not be afraid to share! Your insights might assist someone else in their understanding of the topics. Your question might very well be the same question someone else has. Some of the questions below will invite a personal sharing; other questions will invite you to share with others what you read in the chapter for this discussion. The goal is to share personally and to make sure that the faith of our Church is clearly expressed and understood by all.

Two sacraments are to be discussed in this session, so be careful not to spend all of your time only on one of them. Most of the time may be needed for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, but make sure to spend at least some time on the Anointing of the Sick.

Questions for the Sacrament of Reconciliation

1. The word “conversion” is not always properly understood. What is your understanding of what it means to go through “an ongoing conversion?” How does the Sacrament of Reconciliation help with this? Is the sacrament only for serious sins committed after Baptism or to assist in ongoing conversion?
2. Why do we need to confess our sins to a priest? Or do we? Can we just go straight to God?
3. Clearly, Jesus bestowed the power of the forgiveness of sins upon His apostles. Discuss the Scripture John 20:21-23 used in the opening prayer.
4. Do you understand the difference between mortal sin and venial sin? Discuss the difference and spend time especially on the following:
 1. The three required aspects of a mortal sin
 2. The effect of an unrepented mortal sin
 3. The various levels of venial sin
 4. The benefit of confessing even the smallest of venial sins

5. Spend some time looking at the examination of conscience in [Chapter 6](#). Feel free to share thoughts on anything that especially catches your attention.
6. Do you ever worry about telling your sins to a priest? Is it embarrassing? Are you ever worried about him breaking the seal of confession? Should we worry about either of these?
7. Discuss the difference between “perfect contrition” and “imperfect contrition.” Discuss also how a “firm purpose of amendment” is integral to contrition.
8. Do you have any questions/concerns on the actual celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation that you wanted to discuss with the group? General questions or practical questions?

Questions for the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick

1. Has anyone had an experience with the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick that they'd like to share? Either being anointed yourself or having a loved one anointed?
2. Illness can bring with it experiences of the following: powerlessness, limitations, finitude, glimpse of death, anguish, self-absorption, despair, revolt against God, Christian maturity, search and return to God. Discuss these experiences that can come with illness. Feel free to share any personal experiences, as long as they are not confidential.
3. What are the spiritual benefits of experiencing serious illness? How might the Sacrament of Anointing provide grace to enter into these spiritual benefits?
4. Who can be anointed? Is it for anyone? Or is it for a specific category of people who have a particular need? Obviously it is the latter, so discuss the description of who should get anointed as outlined in the book.
5. Discuss the following effects of the Sacrament of Anointing as outlined in the [Catechism #1532](#):
 - a. *the uniting of the sick person to the passion of Christ, for his own good and that of the whole Church;*
 - b. *the strengthening, peace, and courage to endure in a Christian manner the sufferings of illness or old age;*
 - c. *the forgiveness of sins, if the sick person was not able to obtain it through the Sacrament of Penance;*
 - d. *the restoration of health, if it is conducive to the salvation of his soul;*
 - e. *the preparation for passing over to eternal life.*

20 minutes - Final Reflections and sharing

Go around and give each person an opportunity to share what might have stood out the most to them from the discussion or what left them the most confused, so as to gain further clarity or insight from others.

5 minutes - Closing prayer

Leader begins with the Sign of the Cross and invites a minute of silence with all eyes closed. Each person should reflect upon what was discussed tonight, especially what stood out to him/her the most.

Leader then prays the following prayer:

Father of Mercy, we turn to You in our need and our sin. Help us to be confident in Your abundant compassion so that we may always return to You when we go astray.

Lord, give us courage to see our sin. Give us courage to confess our sin in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. In that encounter with Your mercy, help us to be strengthened to turn from all sin.

Lord, we pray for all those who are seriously ill. May they be strengthened by You to unite their sufferings with Yours as they receive Your grace in the Sacrament of Anointing. And may all sufferings we endure in life become a source of grace and holiness for us and for all.

Jesus, we trust in You.

Leader then invites everyone present to offer their own prayer in the following way (Note: This can be done out loud, but it might be preferable if it's done in silence at the discretion of the leader):

Let us now each bring our own personal concerns before our Lord, trusting that He hears us and knows all we need. Let us entrust these prayers to Him with full confidence that He desires to take control.

(Take a minute of silence for each person to speak to God about their own personal needs).

Leader then invites everyone to close with the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be.