

Reflections

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The Sick, God's Favorites

Upon speaking about the sacrament of the sick, we confirm one reality: As Catholics, we hardly concern ourselves religiously about our sick. We do concern ourselves materially: we call the doctor, we take them to the hospital, etc.; but we do not call the priest....at least not while the sick person isn't ready to die because he/she could die of fright when he/she sees the priest enter.

Many of us think that the priest is only called to officially bid farewell to the dying person; therefore, we wait until the last moment when the sick person is unconscious, and does not see that they are going to pray for him/her.

Thus, the need for religious help which the conscious sick person has, we overlook. Precisely there is where our separated brethren are ahead of us because they better attend to their sick.

In part, I think we do this due to ignorance because we do not know that "anointing of the sick" is just like what its name indicates – for the sick. It is for all those complaining of some grave or prolonged illness although they may not be in danger of near death or agony. The meaning of this sacrament is to ask for the strength of God – His spirit of fortitude – not only for the soul but also for the body.

In the ritual of this sacrament, the Church expresses its faith that God not only conquers sin, but also its exterior and physical consequences. Therefore, it is the great **sacrament of hope**. It requires us to believe that Christ has the power to alter the course of an illness and to make miracles.

In spite of what has been said, **the main objective of the sacrament** – and the one which always takes place – is the spiritual objective: the forgiveness of sins, the consolation and inner strengthening of the sick person. This sacrament helps him/her to discover the deep and purifying meaning of his/her illness:

- to unite his/her pains to the redeeming passion of Jesus
- to grow in Christian hope and confidence.

Physical health is a secondary objective which is also petitioned for, but especially appealing to the free goodness of God.

He can grant it, and we must believe in it, but the sacrament should not be understood as a magical rite which obliges God to perform a miracle.

Mary, with her sensitivity for personal love, helps us to discover the only and unique value which each human has for God – and also each sick person – by the sole fact of being a person and being his child.

In our modern society, the sick are often considered a bother.....because they cause inconveniences, they take up time and money, they produce nothing. Even among the Christians, that utilitarian attitude can be sensed somewhat. Few are those who want to dedicate themselves **to the apostolate of the sick**. Lastly, the Blessed Virgin shows us, in the light of faith, the saving power which pain has: like a purifying power, like the power of supplication and redemption.....because with supplications and pain – which She shared generously – her Son saved the entire world.

The sick, precisely because they suffer – and also because they have a great deal of time to pray – far from being a bother, should be considered a treasure of the Church and of each Christian family.....like the favorite brethren of the Lord.

Mary knows that a Church which does not dedicate itself lovingly to the sick, cannot be the Church of God.....of that God who came to announce the Good News to the poor and to free the oppressed, because Jesus always counted among his favorites the sick and those who suffer.

May our Blessed Mother from her Shrine grant us the grace to know how to value and love our sick as her Son Jesus Christ did.

Questions for reflection

1. Do I have faith in a miraculous healing?
2. What is my attitude toward sick persons?
3. Do I know what the apostolate of the sick consists of?

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