

# Who Should Be Anointed?

By FATHER ROBERT J. KENNEDY  
Part II

Most Catholics grew up with the idea that when a person was anointed he or she was already on the way through the Pearly Gates to meet Saint Peter. It seemed to be a sort of religious verdict of death. However, we saw last week that the Sacrament of Anointing is for the living, not for the dead. It is the Church's prayer for healing, not the beginning of the funeral rite.

Nonetheless, the question of who should be anointed remains a delicate one for the sacrament should not be too tightly defined, neither should it be cheapened. The rite itself states that "those who are seriously ill (periculose aegrotans) due to sickness or old age" are ready candidates for this sacrament. It goes on to say that "prudent or probable judgment about the seriousness of the sickness is sufficient; in such a case there is no reason for scruples, but if necessary a doctor may be consulted." (para. #8) Who are these seriously ill?

Let us begin by saying who they are not. The seriously ill intended to benefit from this sacrament are not those with spiritual sickness, crises of faith or problems with prayer; the proper healing for this is spiritual direction and the Sacrament of Penance. Those with

## INSIGHTS On Pastoral Liturgy

head colds, measles, back trouble or whatever are likewise not candidates for anointing, unless such an ordinary sickness would begin to lead a person to dangerous illness. Neither should everyone who enters a hospital be anointed simply because he is there. In addition, those ill or weak due to old age are not all those over sixty-five. It is a horrendous American myth that everyone who has reached 65 is no longer useful. Let's not support this error by indiscriminately anointing everyone beyond this age. Finally, the dead should not be anointed; instead, "the priest should pray for the dead person, asking that God forgive his or her sins, and graciously receive him or her into the kingdom." (#15)

If there is doubt whether the person is dead, anointing may be done conditionally.

Who, then, does fall into the category of the seriously ill? The answer becomes quickly evident if a parish is fulfilling its responsibility of offering loving care for all

of its sick. Without giving a complete and detailed listing, it should be sufficient to say the seriously ill are those who warrant the prayer of the Church on their behalf. This would also include those who face surgery prompted by a dangerous condition or illness; those persons old and young, who are in a chronically weak condition, sick children if they have sufficient use of reason to find comfort in it (although Confirmation and Eucharist might be better), and even those "who have lost consciousness or lost the use of reason, if, as Christian believers, they would have asked for it were they in control of their faculties." (#14)

This latter raises the question of whether the mentally ill should also be anointed. Again, a minister should make a careful and prudent judgment about this, but the American bishops have approved it if mentally ill persons "would be comforted by the sacrament." Such a decision to anoint might be made in consultation with medical personnel entrusted with the sick person's care.

It is important that "in public and private catechesis, the faithful should be encouraged to ask for the anointing and, as soon as the time for anointing comes, to receive it with complete faith and devotion, not misusing the sacrament by putting it off. All who care for the sick should be taught the meaning and purpose of anointing." (#13)

In this way, there will be no fear or loss of hope in receiving the sacrament. We will welcome this gift for ourselves and our loved ones, a prayer that will ask that the sick be raised up, not to everlasting life necessarily, but to a new life of health and peace in the community.

angry feelings are allowed to go unchecked, harsh words explode into slander — striking back maliciously, actually lying about another to hurt him. Finally, the lid goes off, and one surrenders to malice of every kind, as did the Scribes and Pharisees against Jesus.

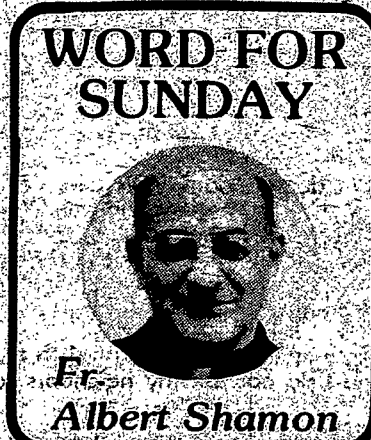
However, Christianity is more than something negative, like not doing evil; Christianity is something positive, like doing what is Christlike. Becoming like Him, kind to one another, compassionate, and mutually forgiving.

But who can do this? It is a big order. Love is not easy, as we have said. We cannot drill for it within ourselves. We cannot conjure it up by some kind of incantation. As a candle must be lit by a fire outside itself, so love must be enkindled within us by someone outside ourselves. This is true of human love. It is more true of divine love. Only a God who is love can set man's heart on fire with love.

And that is the unique purpose of the Eucharist, for the Eucharist is God among us. And God is among us as bread, to strengthen us so that we can walk to the Mount of Vision. Among us as bread, to nourish life — a life of love. And so a living bread — a bread that confers life eternal. "If anyone eats this bread, he shall live forever." Live forever — Jesus said so. He has never been known to lie. He called Himself, "the Truth."

And so the Council of Trent told us that the bread given Elijah, in the strength of which he walked to the mountain of God, is a figure of the Eucharist. "By its vigor Christians are enabled to travel this pilgrimage of misery and come at last to their heavenly fatherland" (DB 882).

Only one thing is needed — faith. And faith is an act of coming (to the Eucharist), caused by an interior action from God the Father. He draws by His words and Word, and we are drawn by hearing, learning and believing.



WORD FOR SUNDAY  
Fr. Albert Shamon

Sunday's Readings: (R3) In: 6:41-51, (R1) 1 Kgs. 19:4-8, (R2) Eph. 4:30-5:2

In the time of Elijah (c. 850 B.C.), Jezebel, the queen, led Israel to worship false gods (baals). Elijah killed the priests of Baal. For this the Queen was furious and threatened the life of Elijah. He fled southward toward Judah. Because Athalia, daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, was queen of Judah, Elijah did not stop there but went on to the desert south of Judah. Tired from the journey and weary of running away, Elijah pleaded for death. God answered his prayer, like Jesus' in Gethsemane, by sending an angel to strengthen him with food, drink and sleep. In that strength, Elijah walked to the mountain of God, Horeb (Mt. Sinai), to draw new strength at the wellsprings of Israel's faith.

Elijah walked to the Mount of Vision. But there is another walk each of us must make: it is to the high hills of heaven. It can be reached only by taking the road of love.

One would think that to love were an easy thing to do. But apparently it is not. Of the many songs about love, more and more of them are pleading for love. As one song goes: "What the world needs now is love, sweet love, it's the only thing there's just too little of."

Long ago, St. Paul urged his Ephesians to slough off their love-lack. In a sequence, mounting in intensity (R2), he told them to eradicate bitterness — that feeling of resentment for another that can infect any one of us. To reject passion and anger, that is, the feeling of wanting to strike back, get even, give punch for punch, and bump for bump. To avoid harsh words, which inevitably erupt when inward anger is nursed. "For what the mind conceives the heart cannot withhold." When bitter,

### French Singers Scheduled Here

The Little Singers of the Cross of Lorraine, a French choral group, will be performing in Rochester on Aug. 19-20 as they tour America. Sponsored by St. Charles Borromeo Church, Bethany Presbyterian Church and the Rochester/Monroe County Bicentennial Committee, the internationally known Catholic chorus will sing classical selections and American jazz and folk songs.

The Little Singers are directed by Emile Fonteyn, with piano accompaniment by Bruno Fonteyn. Admission will be free to the concerts, which include performances at St. Charles Borromeo Church on Aug. 19 at 8 p.m., at Crossroads Park at noon, Aug. 20, and at the Eastman House, Aug. 20 at 8 p.m.

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### Blue Army Sets Vigil

The Blue Army will sponsor an all-night vigil beginning Friday, Aug. 6 at Holy Rosary Church, 414 Lexington. Corresponding with the Blue Army vigil at the Eucharistic Congress in Philadelphia, local rites will begin with a 9 p.m. Mass celebrated by Father Louis Vezelis, OFM, of St. George's Parish in honor of the Sacred Heart. The 6 a.m. Mass Saturday will be celebrated by Father Robert Meng, pastor of Holy Rosary, in honor of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Prayers will be led by Father John Murphy of St. Lawrence, and Father Francis Vogt of St. Bridget's.

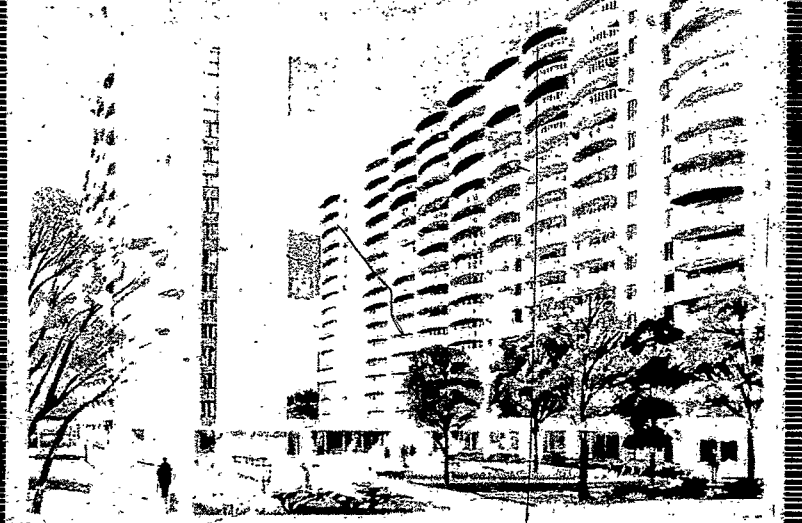
At the Eucharistic Congress, Father Howard Rafferty, O.Carm, will speak on the scapular and his interview with Sister Lucia, the only survivor of the three children who reported a vision of Mary at Fatima, Portugal in 1917.

**MYSTERY RIDE**  
Penn. Yan — Members of the Catholic Daughters of America from St. Michael's Church, will meet Tuesday, Aug. 10 for their annual Mystery Ride. Assembling in front of the Church the caravan will leave at 6 p.m.

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