

# FAITH NOTES

Volume I, Issue 4

October 15/16, 2016

## Immaculate Conception/St. Anthony

### Inside this issue:

Loved Sinners	2
The Faces of Sin	2
God's Loving For-	3
Anointing of the Sick	3
Questions for Reflec-	4

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

A former colleague had the nickname “whisper jet.” His students dubbed him this because of the difficulty they had in listening to his lectures: he spoke in a soft voice and very quickly! A small example like this illustrates how names work—they tell us something important about the reality.

We name this week's Sacraments, the Sacraments of Healing. In each, we



are encountered by the Risen Christ who offers his healing touch in Reconciliation (Penance) and the Anointing of the Sick. You will notice that the Church

no longer refer to them as Confession and Extreme Unction because these older names do not communicate what these sacramental encounters are about. However, we do find that the media: TV movies, newspapers still use the older titles.



## The Tree and the Forest

The proverbially “can't see the forest for the trees” could be a risk we take with our focus on the individual Sacraments. It's important then, in these explorations that, from time to time, we remind ourselves of the big picture.

As disciples of Jesus Christ we journey with him in the

community of faith: it began at birth and will end at death. There are “two sets of eyes” with which to view this journey: our ordinary eyes and those of faith. In the former we mark off events such as going to elementary school or taking adult education classes.

With the eyes of faith we penetrate the surface and see more deeply into the journey and recognize that this

is a profound human journey into the mystery of God which is at the same time the mystery of human life being transformed into the divine.

The Sacraments are those privileged opportunities for us to celebrate, remember, and make present Christ's presence to us: forgiving, healing, offering us life and life to the fullest.



## LOVED SINNERS

As Catholics we believe we are “loved sinners.” This curious phrase conveys our belief that God takes the initiative in relating to us individually and communally. That is, God loved us into existence and lovingly sustains us with each breath of our existence. The Old Testament is filled with stories of God reaching

out to individuals and the Israelite community inviting them into a covenant relationship which would bring them freedom and hope. Jesus Christ continues the covenant tradition and expresses his love in words and the ultimate action of giving his life for us on the cross. In this loving outreach, Jesus Christ offers us life and

ultimate fulfillment.

Said another way, God’s love for us carries with it the desire that we become all that we can be: creatures made in the image and likeness of God. What an awesome calling!

As we look at our lives and our life, it is clear that both individually and communally we repeatedly fail to live out this call

## THE FACES OF SIN

*Nothing can  
take away  
God’s love from  
us!*

Many and varied images are used for talking about sin in our lives, communities, and social systems: guilt, shame, missing the mark, etc. At bottom, however, is the mystery of evil. We call it such because evil, like any mystery, is a reality that we can come to know partially but never fully comprehend.

In Catholic circles we talk about three faces of sin: original, social, and personal. Original sin is aptly described as the condition of evil into which we are born. It pulls us in the direction of selfishness and egocentrism. The power of grace (God’s gracious drawing near.) moves us to be for oth-

ers.

Social sin involves customs and structures which hold sinful practices in place. These structures and customs are human creations that offend human dignity by causing people to suffer oppression, exploitation or marginalization. These may include education systems, housing policies, tax structures, immigration policies, health care systems, employment policies, economic systems, etc. Of late we are recognizing social sin in how we treat the earth, our common home.

The context for exploring personal sin is our human dignity and the incredible gift

to which God is calling us. God is inviting us to become Godlike by becoming more and more like Jesus Christ in how we think, feel, value and act.

We need to know, not only intellectually but in our hearts, how much God loves us and desires to lavish true life on us. As we allow God’s unchanging love to penetrate our hearts, we are gradually converted and release the claim sin has on our hearts and see the mercy that shines through sin itself.

How do we discover what is sinful in our lives? What others have named us a reliable sources: Ten Commandments, *Matthew 25* (scene of the last

**Love one another as  
I have loved you.**

It is no secret that many Catholics have changed the frequency with which they celebrate this Sacrament. Many reasons are suggested for this change. Time and space do not permit an exploration.

In revising the Rites for the celebration of the Sacraments, the Church offered three forms for the celebration of this sacrament: individual; Communal;

Communal with general absolution. Most people's experience is limited to the first two rites.

With these revisions, a Liturgy of the Word or a reading from Scripture is proclaimed before any conversation between the priest and penitent. This simple addition puts the focus on God's activity and stresses the fact that we all need to hear God's word about sin,

the sinner and forgiveness.

Over the years since the Council of Trent (mid 16<sup>th</sup> century) we have named and seen this Sacrament as Confession which is unfortunate. It puts too much focus on us, and us talking about the dark sides of our lives.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* offers a number of names for the sacrament: each offering a different emphasis. Might we not call it the

Sacrament of God's Loving Forgiveness? In this way we spotlight God's activity and take the attention off of ourselves. Perhaps with this name change, and change of attitudes, more people might celebrate the Sacrament and profit from the spiritual direction they receive as they share candidly about where they are in their journey with Jesus Christ and those things that get in the way of their deeper conversion to his values, attitudes and ways of being and acting.

## ANOINTING OF THE SICK

A priest was telling stories of visiting hospital patients. Upon his arrival some became frightened and agitated because they thought he was there to anoint them which meant, "they were going to die!" This was a, not too uncommon, association to this Sacrament.

The *Sacred Constitution on the Liturgy* called for a revision of all the rites associated with the Sacraments. To accomplish this in keeping with the vision of Vatican II, research was necessary as to the origin, development and changes over the two thousand year history. This Sacrament continues the healing ministry of Jesus Christ. Throughout the *Gospels* we see Jesus curing lepers, healing the blind, the lame the paralyzed. St. James in his letter advises that if

there is anyone sick among you to call in the priest.

The sick person was prayed over and then anointed with oil. Olive oil had been blessed by the Bishop at a special ceremony. In modern times, the Bishop blesses three oils (Oil of Catechumens, Oil of the Sick, and Chrism) at the Chrism Mass and some of each are sent to the parishes of the diocese.

Serious illness and sickness in these early days was very often fatal since they did not have the benefits of medical technology. Thus, the anointing was quickly associated with the dying process. Before long, it then became seen as a healing of the soul rather than a physical or emotional healing. In short order, it became known as "Extreme Unction"—the last anointing:

the previous anointings being Baptism and Confirmation.

The Sacrament includes a Liturgy of the Word or a reading from scripture, a laying on of hands, and anointing with the blessed oil on the forehead and hands. Through the anointing, sins are forgiven and prayers are raised for the healing of body and spirit.

No longer is the Church's vision of the Sacrament limited to those who are at death's door. Anyone who is seriously ill, about to undergo serious surgery, or suffering the infirmities of old age are encouraged to meet the Risen Christ and his healing touch in this Sacrament. The picture to the right shows a parish celebration of the communal rite. It is moving and inspiring to celebrate the

Sacrament in a communal setting where the sick, the elderly, and those facing serious surgery are prayer for and supported by the other members of the faith community.

Lest we conclude that since this Sacrament is for the Sick, the dying do not have a special sacrament. For those who are in the dying process, the Church's pastoral care involves a praying with the person and Viaticum (Holy Communion).



## Immaculate Conception/St. Anthony

Material prepared by  
Sister Jean Flannelly, SC  
flannellysc@aol.com

LOVED SINNERS continued ing. Many of these failures are through our own fault, our resistance to grow, to become more fully Christ-like. These deliberate actions and omissions we name sin. Hence, we recognize that we are not only loved by God but also sinners.

### Final Session

Marriage

Thursday, October 27,  
7:00PM

Saturday, November 5,  
2:30 PM  
(skipping Oct 30th)

Immaculate Conception  
Parish Center

ANOINTING..continued judgment), commandments of the Church. The collective experience of the Church does identify a range of actions and choices that may be deadly sin, serious sin, less serious sin or perhaps no sin at all.

To discover, in a more profound way, what is sinful in our life is not easy, partly because of the human tendency to resist recognizing our faults and weaknesses. This discovery will require an unveiling, not only with the aid of what others have named as sin, but also, the aid of the Spirit, of what each person knows to be sin in is or her heart.

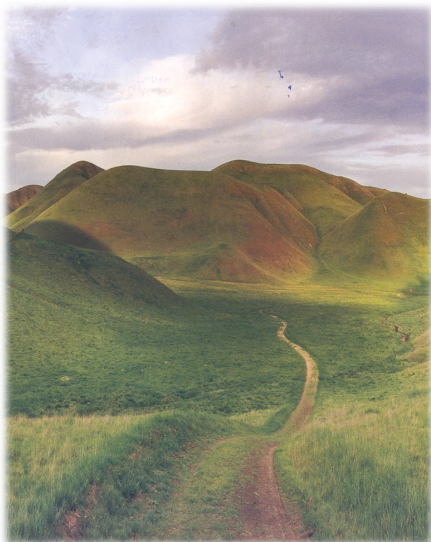
At Baptism we were anointed with the Holy Spirit who, if we give permission, will empower us with love and assist us in our journey of growing into the divine likeness. The

Holy Spirit works through the community to assist us to develop more just structures that respect the dignity of each human person and promote the common good.

Next week will be the final issue of *Faith Notes* associated with October's "Whole Parish Catechesis Month."

We hope that the notes and the sessions have prompted you to reflect more deeply on your faith: what we believe and the place your faith has in your everyday life.

## QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION



How have my ideas about and images of God changed over the years?

and just listen to myself? Nature? God?

What helps me know Jesus Christ better?

What do I need to help me grow in my understanding of our, my faith?

How often do I take or make time to be quiet