

Matins Reflection on Anointing

by Mary Schiedel, with input from Elvera Froese and Ron Flaming Lent 2017

In the Old Testament the practice of anointing by pouring oil on the head was used as a symbolic act to authorize a person for leadership.

Prophets were anointed ... to be able to proclaim God's word.

Priests were anointed ... to carry out their duties of worship and sacrifice.

Kings were anointed ... so they could rule.

The act of pouring oil represented the outpouring of God's Spirit onto the person.

All Christians are anointed, according to 2Cor 1:21 and 1John 2:20,27 and thus are authorized and empowered agents of God. We all have direct access to God and all believers have the Spirit within who leads into all truth in Christ and enables us to be His witnesses.

The special anointing of the sick has its roots in the healing miracles of Jesus Christ who healed people physically and spiritually. In James 5:13-16 believers are instructed to ask for anointing when ill. In the Orthodox tradition anointing is administered not only for physical ailments, but for spiritual ills as well.

Anointing during Lent brings to mind the anointing of Ash Wednesday when the oil is mixed with ashes to remind us of our mortality and to offer graces necessary for a dying person preparing for death. It pours out consolation and hope.

Anointing is an act of prayer that invites the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to heal body, mind and spirit. It gives courage, strength and peace to face illness and brokenness. It promises physical and/or spiritual healing according to God's will. Anointing reminds us that we can trust God no matter what happens.

*O God, we come to you at this time
Because you love us.
You know us more deeply than we know ourselves.
You desire wholeness for each of your children,
Broken as we are in body, mind and spirit.
As we come before you, we pray for healing
In each of our lives.*

*Restore us according to Your will,
Through Jesus Christ our Saviour and Lord we pray,
Amen. (adapted HWB #799)*