SESSION ONE: September 8, 2011

Introduction

- Holistic View of Anointing and Pastoral Care of the Sick
- Anointing as a Vocation/Call for the Sick Person
- Scripture and Tradition: Sacraments and History
- Vocations of the Anointed Sick and Elderly
- Implications for Pastoral Ministry

Holistic View of Anointing and Pastoral Care of the Sick

- Scripture
  - James 5:14-14; Mark 6:13
  - Paul VI, Apostolic Constitution for Pastoral Care of the Sick (hereafter PCS)
- Tradition
  - Fourth century prayer of Serapion
- Current Rite
  - “Ministry of mutual charity … ministry of comfort” (PCS 33-34)
  - Litany, laying on of hands, and prayer over the oil (PCS 121-123)

Anointing as a Vocation/Call for the Sick Person

- Who are the proper subjects of anointing of the sick?
  - Review PCS 8-15, 52-53
  - Discernment with individual in concert with loved ones and caregivers
- A calling due not to strengths or gifts but, rather, weakness and need
  - But what does that reveal about the Gospel’s call in general and, thus, all Christian vocations?
  - Helpful to consider this sacrament’s symbols in relation to their broader function in scripture and tradition
Scripture and Tradition: Sacraments and History

- Early prayers and texts play on anointing imagery in terms of prophets, priests, and kings of the Old Testament
- May make us think first of RC priesthood
  - Anointing of hands, laying on of hands, (earlier) presentation of gospel book
  - But that is as a symbol of and for the whole body of Christ, the church
- Perhaps has us next think of confirmation?
  - Holy Spirit
  - Laying on of hands and anointing of head
- But, fundamentally, baptism
  - Anointings of catechumens and later with chrism
  - Christ = Messiah = Anointed One
  - Baptized are members of his body, born from above to remain in him
- Implications for chaplains
  - Attend to and reflect on these rites
  - Recall them with the sick and elderly
  - What do these rites, in themselves and in relation to each other, say about faith?

Vocations of the Anointed Sick and Elderly

- Yes, weak in one or more ways: physical, emotional, spiritual
- However, each sick or elder person’s role/contribution in the church is raised up in the rite, making this also a vocational sacrament.
  - Key insight from James Empereur in his book, Prophetic Anointing
  - Read sections from Divine Worship and Human Healing, 162-163.
- Moreover, the renegotiation of divine-human relationship in the sacrament of anointing opens into the time God will grant that person.
  - Long term, recurrent, or terminal illness
  - Hence, importance of not delaying anointing (PCS 13, 99)
  - Hence, also, normative value of celebrating in communities (e.g. nursing home services, parish liturgies)
- Extenuating and emergency circumstances of the hospital
  - Must consider family, friends, and caregivers in relation to the sick (PCS 99)
  - William Reiser’s interpretation of Mark 9:14-29 (see DWHH, 88-89, 112-117)
Implications for Pastoral Ministry

- Ritual and symbol works on us over time.
  - Pastoral minister reflects on prayers, elements of rites in own prayer
  - Pastoral minister does the same with patient and family/caregivers/friends
  - Possible replication or repetition of elements of rite of anointing with sick or elderly person or, more often and better yet, making connections between the sacrament and elements in the rituals for visiting the sick and communion of the sick

- Avoid, of course, telling the patient how or who s/he is.
  - “Mildred, Is It Fun to Be a Cripple?” The Culture of Suffering in Mid-Twentieth Century Catholicism,” in Robert Orsi’s Between Heaven and Earth
  - Vocation dimension of anointing can tacitly inform ministry in each case (in evoking person’s story/stories, reflection with or about family and friends, present concerns or joys, etc.)

- Open discussion of participants comments and questions

QUESTION AND ANSWER