

BLESSINGS AND MINOR EXORCISMS AND ANOINTINGS

PRAYERS OF HEALING MINOR EXORCISMS

90 The first or minor exorcisms have been composed in the form of petitions directly addressed to God.

They draw the attention of the catechumens to the real nature of Christian life, the struggle between flesh and spirit, the importance of self-denial for reaching the blessedness of God's kingdom, and the unending need for God's help.

91 The presiding celebrant for the minor exorcisms is a priest, a deacon, or a qualified catechist appointed by the bishop for this ministry (see no. 16).

92 The minor exorcisms take place within a celebration of the word of God held in a church, a chapel, or in a centre for the catechumenate.

A minor exorcism may also be held at the beginning or end of a meeting for catechesis.

When there is some special need, one of these prayers of exorcism may be said privately for individual catechumens.

93 The formularies for the minor exorcisms may be used on several occasions, as different situations may suggest.

THE JOURNEY TOWARDS HEALING

- From the evil spirit to the Holy Spirit
- From false values to the truth
- From disfigurement to God's image and likeness
- From greed, lust and power to the Beatitudes
- From unfaithfulness to faithfulness
- From a selfish heart to and generous heart
- From the slavery of Satan to life in Jesus Christ
- From words of hopelessness to the good news of hope
- From conflict and division to the peace and love of Christ
- From the lies of the tempter to the wisdom of the cross
- From the pain of thirsting to the joy of being quenched with living water

BLESSINGS OF THE CATECHUMENS (RCIA 95-96)

95 The blessings of the catechumens are a sign of God's love and of the Church's tender care.

They are bestowed on the catechumens so that, even though they do not as yet have the grace of the sacraments, they may still receive from the Church courage, joy, and peace as they proceed along the difficult journey they have begun.

96 The blessings may be given by a priest, a deacon, or a qualified catechist appointed by the bishop (see no. 16).

The blessings are usually given at the end of a celebration of the word; they may also be given at the end of a meeting for catechesis.

When there is some special need, the blessings may be given privately to individual catechumens.

PRAYERS OF BLESSINGS AND HEALINGS

- **When?** Usually at the end of the celebration of the liturgy of the word.
- **Why?** Because reflecting on the word of God is like a double-edged sword (Hebrews ...). The word of God makes the catechumens aware of their need for God's blessing and healing.
- **For whom?** The catechumens.
- **By whom?** By a priest or deacon or an appointed catechist.
- **What structure?** They have the structure and format of all liturgical rituals: they include **word** and **action**.

THE LITURGICAL ACTION

The liturgical action is clearly outlined in RCIA 97:

“The celebrant, with hands outstretched over the catechumens, says one of the following prayers.

After the prayers of blessing [and of healing], if this can be done conveniently, the catechumens come before the celebrant, who lays hands on them individually.”

Note: the personal and intimate action: hands on one's head followed by a moment of silence before the prayer.

THE MEANING OF THE ACTION

The blessings of the catechumens are a sign of God's love and of the Church's tender care.

They are bestowed on the catechumens so that, even though they do not as yet have the grace of the sacraments, they may still receive from the Church courage, joy, and peace as they proceed along the difficult journey they have begun. (See RCIA 95)

THE WORDS ACCOMPANYING THE TEXT

The words give shape to the liturgical action and are in response to what has arisen during the celebration and reflection on the word of God, as the catechumens share their own personal experiences.

The theme of the prayers of blessings and healing will therefore cover the whole range of the human experience: the personal, moral, intellectual, social, emotional, psychological and physical experiences of their life.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?

With **the prayers of blessings** the Church publicly proclaim that the catechumens

- Are on a journey towards a loving and tender God;
- Strive to live their whole life in the presence of and under the protection of a loving God;
- Proclaim that their whole life is a blessing from God.
- Believe that God's blessing becomes a reality for them in THIS liturgical action.

With **the prayers of healings** the Church publicly proclaims that the catechumens:

- Acknowledge that they are not perfect, make mistakes and sin;
- Are aware that there is a struggle within them between sinfulness and holiness (RCIA 90)
- Proclaim their unending need for God's help (RCIA 90)
- Believe in a God who forgives their sins when they turn to God
- Believe that God's forgiveness becomes a reality for them in THIS liturgical action.

HEALING CHANTS

- Healing is your touch, o God, renewing the spirit of the broken. Healing is your touch, o God, renewing the spirit of the broken (Monica Brown)
- I will live for you alone, for you alone I'll live. Heal me, heal me, heal me and let me free. (Trish Watts)
- I you believe and I believe and we together pray, the Holy Spirit must come down and set God's people free, and set God's people free, and set God's people free. The Holy Spirit must come down and set God's people free (John Bell)

BLESSING CHANTS

- May God bless and keep you, may God's face shine on you; may God be kind to you and give you peace.
- May God bless and keep us, may God's face shine on us; may God be kind to us and give us peace. (Christopher Walker)
- May the Lord bless us all the days of our lives. Bless us lovingly all the days of our lives. (Frank Andersen)
- May the blessing of God go before you. May her grace and peace abound. May her spirit live within you. May her love wrap you 'round. May her blessing remain with you always. May you walk on holy ground. (Marie Therese Winter)

ANOINTING OF THE CATECHUMENS

- 98 During the period of the catechumenate, a rite of anointing the catechumens, through use of the oil of catechumens, may be celebrated wherever this seems beneficial or desirable. The presiding celebrant for such a first anointing of the catechumens is a priest or a deacon. [103, 127]
- 99 The anointing ordinarily takes place after the homily in a celebration of the word of God (see no. 89), and is conferred on each of the catechumens; this rite of anointing may be celebrated several times during the course of the catechumenate. Further, for particular reasons, a priest or a deacon may confer the anointing privately on individual catechumens. [128]
- 100 The oil used for this rite is to be the oil blessed by the bishop at the chrism Mass, but for pastoral reasons a priest celebrant may bless oil for the rite immediately before the anointing.

A PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

Luke 17:11-19 (NRSV) Jesus Cleanses Ten Lepers

¹¹ On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. ¹² As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, ¹³ they called out, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" ¹⁴ When he saw them, he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were made clean. ¹⁵ Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. ¹⁶ He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. ¹⁷ Then Jesus asked, "Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they?" ¹⁸ Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" ¹⁹ Then he said to him, "Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well."

THE PROCESS

1. Proclaim the gospel of the Ten lepers. Pause for a short reflection and then explore the meaning of the story.
2. Share some of your personal stories based on the story of the Ten Lepers. (Have you ever experienced being rejected and ostracized? Have you ever caused others to feel rejected or ostracized?)
3. In what ways are your personal experiences stories of healing and in what way are they stories of blessing?
4. Each member of the group articulates a short prayer of blessing and a short prayer of healing based on the shared stories of rejection and of being rejected.

EVALUATION

- What did the celebration do for you?
- What were the positive elements of the celebration?
- Are there any question or comment arising from the celebration?
- What are your best experiences in the celebration of the rites of blessings and healings?
- Any creative ideas and suggestions for the celebration of the minor rites?
- What is the role of the community?
- How to prepare the parish priest and the parish for the celebration?