

This prayer service is best used anytime during the study of the sacraments of healing (chapters 6-7) in the book *Our Sacramental Life*.

**Prayer Service:**  
**“The Ministry of Comfort”**

**Teacher Background**

In *Apostolic Constitution on the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick*, the source of the second reading of this prayer service, the Church calls us to a “ministry of comfort” (no. 43). This prayer service, offered in connection with the chapters on the Sacraments of Healing, makes this call of the Church tangible and practical for the students. Students frequently will ask us to pray for their sick relatives and friends. This prayer encourages that practice and raises their intention to the level of ministry.

**Needs:**

- A decorated prayer table with the Bible and other optional symbols of healing
- *(Optional)* Stationery or paper and other supplies for writing notes or creating cards for the sick
- *(Optional)* Soft music to be used during the time of note writing

**Prayer Introduction**

Oftentimes in prayer we are asked to pray for those who are sick or we ask our friends to pray for sick and suffering members of our families. We long to ease the pain of those who suffer. Through the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, Christ strengthens the sick and offers healing. The official minister of the sacrament is the priest, but Jesus and the Church call us to be ministers of healing as well. Praying for and being present to the sick are more than charitable actions. They are our duty, our place in what the Church calls the “Ministry of Comfort.” We will hear this call today and respond through loving actions for those who are suffering.

**Opening Prayer**

**Reading 1: Mark 16:15-20**

*They will place their hands on the sick and they will recover.*

**Pause for Reflection/Journaling**

*In this Gospel reading, Jesus, about to ascend into heaven, leaves behind a mission for his disciples. Whereas Jesus proclaimed the good news, cast out demons, and healed the sick, the disciples are commissioned to do the same. Ask yourself if you have carried out Jesus’ parting request. How have you proclaimed the Gospel, helped to make the world less evil, or offered help to the sick?*

**Reading 2:**

In the *Apostolic Constitution on the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick*, the Church reminds us, “The concern that Christ showed for the bodily and spiritual welfare of those who are ill is continued by the Church in its ministry to the sick. The ministry is the common responsibility of

all Christians, who should visit the sick, remember them in prayer, and celebrate the sacraments with them. The family and friends of the sick...have a particular share in this ministry of comfort. Through words of encouragement and faith they can help the sick.”

### **Ritual: Commissioning for the Ministry of Comfort**

Leader: The Church reminds us that its ministry to the sick is the responsibility of all Christians. If are willing to participate in this ministry, I ask you to demonstrate your willingness by responding, “I am!” to the following questions. First, the Church asks us to visit the sick. Are you willing to be present to those who are sick by visiting the hospitalized, sitting with the aged, sending get well notes to those far away, or bringing the sick items of cheer and comfort?

**All: I am!**

Leader: The Church asks us, also, to remember the sick in our prayers. Are you willing to remember to pray for the sick, to promise to them your prayers, to ask others to pray for you when you are sick, and to pray with those who are sick?

**All: I am!**

Leader: Finally, the Church asks us to celebrate the sacraments with those who are sick. Are you willing to attend (when possible) the sacrament of anointing of the sick and to greet and assist the aged and the sick when they are present at mass?

**All: I am!**

Leader: May God bless you and strengthen you in your participation in the Church’s ministry of comfort. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

**All: Amen.**

### **[Optional Ritual Action**

Ask the students to create cards for/write notes to those who are sick. If they know someone who is sick, they could write to those specific people. If they do not know of any specific person, ask them to write general notes, promises of prayer, and short prayers. These you could bring to the local parish for delivery to the sick of the parish when they are visited or to a local nursing home. Be sure to connect this action to their first two promises above, to visit the sick and pray for them. Soft music could play during this time to continue the prayerful atmosphere.]

### **Prayer of Blessing**

Loving God, source of healing and comfort,  
Send your blessings upon those we bring to you in prayer,  
all who are sick, suffering, anguished, or alone,  
those who are close to us and those unknown to us.  
We mention aloud the names of those we know who are in need of healing:  
*(Pause for names, etc.)*

Have mercy on them, strengthen them, and  
Let them know your healing touch.

Bless, too, these messages of love and healing  
that we will deliver to the sick.  
May they be sources of comfort  
and a witness to our solidarity with them  
and a sign that you, O God, are present to all who suffer.

We ask these prayers in the name of your Son,  
who through his own suffering,  
is Savior to us all. Amen.