Sacraments of Healing: Reconciliation and Anointing

Opening Prayer/Scripture Reading:
'If you, O Lord should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand? But with you is found forgiveness, that You may be revered'. (Psalm 130: 3-4)
Mark 2: 1-12 (forgiveness and healing of the paralytic)

Catholic Update:
How To Celebrate The Sacrament of Reconciliation Today?
How Shall I Fast?-Daily Meditations for Lent
Lent-Giving Our Hearts To God
Anointing of the Sick-A Parish Sacrament
Ten Tips To A Better Confession

Summary:
Through the sacraments of Christian initiation we receive the new life of Christ. But the weakness of human nature and our inclination to sin continues to remain and affect our lives. The Church offers us the sacraments of healing to assist in our daily journeys of conversion and reconciliation.

During his earthly ministry, Jesus forgave sins and healed those who were physically and spiritually broken. Those he forgave were healed, renewed in faith and restored to health of mind and body. The Church continues even today, in the power of the Holy Spirit, the healing work of Jesus Christ. This is the purpose of the two sacraments of healing: the sacrament of Penance and the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.

a. When Jesus forgave sins he also pointed to its effects: the reconciliation of sinners with God and with the community of believers. He gave the apostles his own power to forgive sins and the power to reconcile sinners to God and to the Church. (CCC 1443-1445)

b. Only God forgives sins. Jesus willed that the Church be the sign and instrument of the forgiveness and reconciliation he won for us on the cross with his blood. He entrusted the power of absolution to the apostles and instituted the sacrament of Penance by which the baptized are offered a new possibility of conversion, forgiveness and healing.

c. Interior repentance is a radical reorientation of our whole life, a return to God with all of our heart, a turning away from sin and the resolution to change one's life with hope in God's mercy and grace. (CCC 1430-1433)

d. The sacrament of Reconciliation comprises two essential elements: the actions of the penitent who undergoes conversion in the Holy Spirit, namely contrition, confession and penance; and God's action through the Church's mediation. Penance is a liturgical action (CCC 1480-1484)

e. The 'confessor' (the priest) is not the master of God's forgiveness but its servant. He forgives sins in the name of Jesus Christ so that when he says, 'I absolve you', the 'I' is that of Christ. The 'sacramental seal' of penance means that every priest who hears confessions is bound to keep absolute secrecy regarding the sins confessed to him. What the penitent has made known to the priest remains 'sealed' by the sacrament. (CCC 1466-1467)
f. The sacrament of Reconciliation restores us to God's grace and friendship, and reconciles us with the Church. (CCC 1468-1470)

g. Individual confession and absolution is the ordinary way for the faithful to be reconciled to God, the church and one another (CCC 1484)

h. The sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick strengthens the baptized when they experience grave illness or old age. The sacrament unites the sick person to the suffering of Christ and strengthens them to endure the sufferings of illness or old age. (CCC 1499-1532)

i. The celebration of the Anointing of the Sick consists in the anointing of the forehead and hands of the sick person accompanied with a liturgical prayer asking for special graces of strength, peace and courage.

Discussion Questions:
1. Why do we need a sacrament of reconciliation after baptism?
2. How does the sacrament of Anointing of the Sick continue the healing ministry of Jesus in the Gospels?

Scripture References/Quotations:
Reconciliation:
Mark 1:15; 2:1-12
John 20:19, 22-23

Anointing of the Sick:
Luke 6:19
Mark 1:41; 3:10; 6:56
Matthew 10:8; 25:36

Suggestions For Further Reading:
Sacraments of Healing - CCC 1420-1498
Anointing of the Sick - CCC 1499-1532
Pope John Paul II, Reconciliation and Penance, Reconciliatio et paenitentia, 1984

Closing Prayer
Our Father