



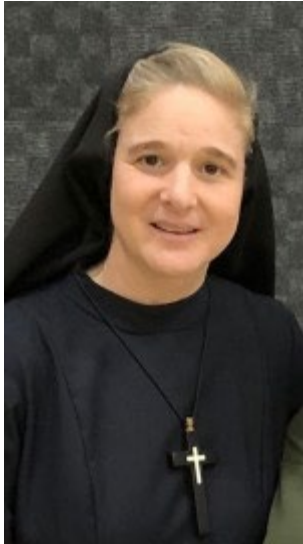
ARCHDIOCESE OF ST. LOUIS
Office of Sacred Worship

LITURGY NOTES

ON CARE OF THE SICK

By: Sister Mary Rachel, RSM, MD, MA

As we approach the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes and the World Day of the sick, I offer a reflection on care of the sick from my vantage point as a religious woman and physician. In the practice of Catholic healthcare, as a religious sister and a physician, I rely on the collaboration of many to meet the unique needs of each human person placed in my care. Called to participate in the healing action of the Lord, physicians engage in the corporal work of mercy of visiting the sick with an intent to diagnose, treat, and accompany them in their sufferings. Christ compassionates Himself toward all who suffer by identifying with them: “I was sick and you visited me” (Mt 25:36 RSV). He identifies with the sick and raises care of the sick to a work of mercy and promises those who undertake this work a place in His kingdom. Physicians can meet Christ daily in their patients, and Christ, the Divine Physician meets them in return! Physicians rely on many to aid their care for patients, but especially priests who can provide the sacraments which bring the fullness of healing. “God who made you cures you with absolute certainty, and he charges no fee. Yield to his hands, then, O soul, you who bless him, mindful of all the ways in which he repays you, for he heals all your diseases” (Augustine, *En. Ps.* 102, 5).



Catholic comprehensive healthcare seeks to embrace the whole human person. While scientific advancements have rapidly aided our understanding and treatment of diseases, at times we seem to lose the personal dimension of the dynamic body and soul composite of each unique human person, created with an intellect and will in God’s likeness. The art of medicine, grounded in the science of medicine, relies upon the God-given talents and education of the physician and the relationship and cooperation with the patient and others who collaborate to meet their diverse needs. Pain, disease, and bodily death will never be conquered on earth by medical sciences or human ingenuity, but they have already been conquered by the Blood of the Lamb, who wrought Redemption and promises resurrection of the body and life everlasting. The human person, made by God for Himself, will find happiness only in God. Our journey to Him in this life is uniquely aided by the sacraments.

In a most concrete way, Christ meets the people of His Body, the Church, by means of His sacraments “ordained for helping man in the spiritual life” (Thomas Aquinas, *ST* III q.73, a.1). We can look to the sacraments of Baptism, Penance, Eucharist and the Anointing of the Sick as particular spiritual remedies for the sick. While physicians seek to offer remedies for the body, Christ offers the curative “antidote” (Augustine, *conf.* 9.4.3) of salvation through grace bestowed in the sacraments. In baptism, Christ heals wounded human nature but leaves man subject to death and disease in his earthly body and in need of medical care. Incorporated into the Passion and death of Christ, each baptized person is cleansed and refreshed but remains passible and able to suffer with Christ the penalties of this present earthly life. So, too, the Sacrament of

Penance offers repeated opportunities to “be healed by the medicine of the sacraments from the plague of sin” (Augustine, *Pecc. Mer.* 8). Frequenting the sacrament of Penance can be a powerful means of grace for both physician and patient.

As baptism spiritually generates life and penance restores life lost through sin, the sacrament of the Eucharist confers upon the members of the Body of Christ the spiritual nourishment of food and drink needed to sustain life. While corporeal food becomes part of the body of the one nourished by it, “spiritual food changes man into itself” (Thomas Aquinas, *ST* III q.73, a. 3, ad. 2). The Eucharist provides *medicamentum* as food but also as medicine for our wounded nature and our sins. Spiritual food sustains the spiritual life, gives it increase, restores it, and delights it (*ST* q. 79, a. 1, corpus). In the Eucharist, Christ is Priest and Victim, Physician and medicine. Making ever present Christ’s Passion, the Eucharist unites mankind to the suffering and death of the Savior and provides food for the journey, salve for our wounds, medicine for our infirmities. Christ Himself is both *medicus* and *medicamentum*: “If all are fit and well, why should such a doctor ever come down from heaven? Why should he make us up a remedy, not from his medicine chest, but from his own blood?” (Augustine, *Serm.* 80.4)

The art of medicine lacks the ability to heal both body and soul but cooperating with the priest who can bring the sacraments of salvation and healing improves the efficacy of health care. Through the sacrament of the sacred anointing of the sick, the Church follows the mandate of Christ to “heal the sick.” By the laying on of hands, anointing with holy oil, and prayers of the priest, “the whole Church commends those who are ill to the suffering and glorified Lord, that he may raise them up and save them. And indeed she exhorts them to contribute to the good of the People of God by freely uniting themselves to the Passion and death of Christ” (*LG* 11). Through this holy anointing, the Holy Spirit confers a particular grace of “strengthening, peace, and courage to overcome the difficulties that accompany serious illness or the frailty of old age” (*CCC* 1520). In the sacrament, the sick receive the grace to unite their sufferings to Christ and participate in His work of Redemption and thereby also contribute to the sanctification of the whole Church. These gifts of the sacrament of sacred anointing offer unique remedies to those who are sick for both physical and spiritual healing.

About the Author: Sister Mary Rachel Nerbun, RSM, MD, MA is a Religious Sisters of Mercy of Alma, Michigan, residing and working in the Archdiocese of St. Louis since 2021. The Religious Sisters of Mercy were originally founded in 1831 in Dublin, Ireland, by Venerable Catherine McAuley, with an apostolate grounded in the fourth vow of service through the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, serving in both health care and education. Sister Mary Rachel attended the George Washington University School of Medicine, graduating in 2006, and completed an Internal Medicine Residency at Saint Mary’s Hospital in Waterbury, Connecticut in 2009. She has practiced internal medicine for 15 years in several outpatient clinics and completed a master’s degree in Theology at the Dominican House of Studies in Washington, DC. Since coming to St. Louis in June of 2021, she serves as medical director of the Rural Parish Clinic of the Archdiocese of St. Louis which provides free, high-quality healthcare to uninsured, income-qualifying adult patients in the rural counties of the Archdiocese of St. Louis through mobile medical and dental clinics staffed by volunteers and funded by private grants and private donors.

If you are interesting in reading messages from St. Pope John Paul II on World Day of the Sick, you can do so [HERE](#).

FROM MY TIME IN LOURDES
By: Father Nicholas Smith, Director of the Office of Sacred Worship

I have always loved Lourdes. It all began when I watched the movie *The Song of Bernadette* in eighth grade. I was intrigued by the story of Saint Bernadette and the visions of Our Lady of Lourdes which resulted in Bernadette unearthing the miraculous spring which has cured thousands spiritually and hundreds physically. I had a rather “romantic” image of Lourdes and its mystique.



It was this love for Lourdes which prompted me to serve as a volunteer at the Shrine at the end of my third year in the seminary. For two months, I, along with hundreds of volunteers from around the world, served as a greeter, assisted loading and unloading patients from train cars coming from throughout Europe, participated in the nightly rosary procession, and aided pilgrims and patients bathing at the baths. Each of these were powerful experiences; however, the most memorable was working in the baths.

Drinking and washing are two actions that pilgrims make in Lourdes, both at the invitation of the Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Lourdes. This practice began following February 25, 1858, which is the day the Virgin Mary showed Saint Bernadette where to dig to unearth the spring at Lourdes. This spring, which flows from the base of the grotto, is where Our Lady of Lourdes invited Bernadette, and all pilgrims, to “go and drink at the spring and wash yourself there!”

There are three sets of baths, one for men, one for women, and one for children, and each set consists of 5 baths each. The first two baths are for infirmed pilgrims or patients, and the remaining three are for pilgrims. Each year thousands of people use the baths. The water is not heated and is usually cold; the temperature is about 50-55 degrees Fahrenheit. The pilgrim, assisted by volunteers of the same sex, removes his/her clothing, except for underclothes, puts on a wrap made of swimming suit-type fabric, and is assisted into the bath for immersion in the water. The immersion takes about a minute, during which time the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be are recited, and a prayer for the intercession of Our Lady of Lourdes and Saint Bernadette is made.

I encountered hundreds of infirmed and healthy pilgrims during the time I volunteered in the baths at Lourdes. Yet, there are two that I will never forget. I mentioned earlier that I made the decision to volunteer at Lourdes following my third year in the seminary. The third year is the acolyte internship during which we are assigned full-time to a local parish. At the end of the following year (fourth year), ordination to the transitional diaconate takes place. So, I was in Lourdes the summer before my deacon ordination year. One of the pilgrims I helped into the bath on one of my first days was an elderly priest from Ireland. We began talking and he told me that he had come to Lourdes when he was first ordained a priest many, many years ago in order to consecrate his priesthood to Mary. Now, after many, many years of ministry, he was coming back to Lourdes, as he prepared to retire, to give his priesthood back to Mary.

The second encounter at the baths at Lourdes that I will always remember happened while I was working in the first baths designated for serious and chronic cases. I had mentioned earlier that after seeing the movie *The Song of Bernadette*, I had a rather “romantic” view of Lourdes. This encounter will kind of explain that notion. On this particular day, one of the chronic pilgrims brought to the bath was a man who had no arms or legs and was seated in a wheelchair. As my partner and I lifted him down into the bath, I had this rather naive thought that two arms and two legs would come forth from his torso and I would be a witness to a “Lourdes Miracle.” Well, arms and legs did not come forth from this man, but I did experience a “Lourdes Miracle” because as we lifted him up from the water, prayed with him, and brought him back to his wheelchair, the biggest smile came over his face, and it was so big that tears were coming from his eyes. The Catholic Church has officially recognized some 67 miracles and around 7,000 inexplicable cures. These, of course, are physical miracles and cures, but on that

day, I had witnessed a profound spiritual miracle, both for that man and for me. How a miracle for me? Well, I have never forgotten that experience.

Lourdes kind of came full circle for me in 2022 when the Basilica of Saint Louis, King (Old Cathedral) was able to host the American tour of the relics of Saint Bernadette. Many years ago, I had gone to Lourdes to see her and now she came to St. Louis to visit me and thousands of others who are touched by her faith.

In 1992, which was the same year I was in Lourdes, Pope Saint John Paul II designated February 11 (Memorial of our Lady of Lourdes) as World Day of the Sick. In his *Letter Instituting the World Day of the Sick*, the saintly Holy Father said the following about this day: "A special time of prayer and sharing, of offering one's suffering for the good of the Church and of reminding us to see in our sick brothers and sisters the face of Christ who, by suffering, dying, and rising, achieved the salvation of mankind (*Letter Instituting the World Day of the Sick*, May 13, 1992, 3).

The Song of Bernadette is based on the novel by the same time written by Franz Werfel. The movie opens with this memorable quote: "For those who believe, no explanation is necessary. For those who do not believe, no explanation is possible." Our Lady of Lourdes and Saint Bernadette, pray for us.



SERVING GOD'S SICK AND POOR

By: Michael W. Weisbrod, Senior Gift Planning Officer, Roman Catholic Foundation of Eastern Missouri

As members of the Roman Catholic Church, we are blessed to have a rich heritage of serving our fellow human beings, regardless of their personal beliefs. Our forebearers were responsible for the creation of the first professional hospitals, orphanages and universities. Many of which are still in service to this day!

Today, as we reflect on these herculean accomplishments, we are blessed with the opportunity to serve our fellow Catholics in many ways. Specifically, as Ministers of Care, taking the Holy Eucharist to our brothers and sisters unable to attend Mass. There are many reasons they are unable to join us for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, most often due to immobility or illness.

At the Cathedral Basilica, there are approximately a dozen men and women who have been fortunate to have received and answered the Call to serve as a Minister of Care.

To most people, serving as a Minister of Care would seem to be a very easy and non-essential Ministry of the Church. In fact, it is far from it. The Ministers does indeed serve as the Priest's

surrogate, providing the parishioner the joy of partaking of our Lord's Body through the host. Additionally, he or she serves as a Disciple of Christ, offering Christ's love and compassion by joining the Communicant in prayer and often serving as a counselor or friendly ear as the Communicant shares personal experiences or concerns over issues important to them.

Some might say that it takes a special person to serve as a Minister of Care. It does, one filled with the love of Christ's love and willingness to share that love with his or her fellow Catholic.

Should you be invited to serve as a Minister of Care, please prayerfully consider this invitation. Christ himself is extending this invitation to you. Do not look at this invitation as a burden or "just one more thing to do". Rather, to share the good news of Christ's death and resurrection in the form of His holy body. Be joyous and allow your life to be filled with the joy of the Communicant. Spending a few minutes with them, getting to know them and hearing their personal stories will give you the grace you may need to get through the trials and travails of your day.

Click [HERE](#) to find a copy of the EMHC Sick and Homebound guidelines. You can also find a copy in Spanish [HERE](#). Please reach out to our office at worship@archstl.org with any questions.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

The time of loss is an opportunity for evangelization, a time to accompany the grieving and make present the love and mercy of Christ. A first step as you grow the ministry of Catholic Grief Support is training. A six week virtual Grief Facilitator Training is available through the Archdiocese of Newark beginning on February 12. See the link below for more information. As you form and grow grief support in your parish, your ministers will have the tools for the journey.

Please contact Cindy Huger with any questions.
314-369-8052 or cgrunik@ymail.com

Training Course

MUSIC



Thank you to all of you who attended our St. Cecilia's Workshop!
Please contact Andrew Kreigh with any questions regarding Sacred Music:
akreigh@cathedralstl.org

CHRISTIAN INITIATION



The Rite of Election of Catechumens and the Call to Continuing Conversion of Candidates who are preparing for Confirmation and Eucharist or Reception into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church

The combined rites that are celebrated at the beginning of Lent mark the spiritual growth of a variety of people. Unbaptized catechumens celebrate the Rite of Election or the Enrollment of Names. Based on the "testimony of godparents and catechists," the church recognizes their spiritual growth and state of readiness to progress. This growth involves catechesis on the core of our faith (the four parts of the catechism), the development of virtue, growth in prayer in both communal and personal ways, and participation in the life and mission of the parish. Having

reviewed their development and commitment, the parish presents catechumens for Election. At the rite of election, the Archbishop asks them to reaffirm their commitment and express their desire for the sacraments of initiation. After receiving their names, presented by the parish coordinators, he declares them to be members of the Elect who are to be initiated at the next Easter Vigil.

The second part of the rite includes two groups of people who while baptized desire to share fully in the sacramental life of the church. First, there are the baptized members of the Catholic Church who were not evangelized or prepared for the other sacraments of initiation. While baptized generally as infants, they did not receive instruction, formation, or sacramental formation as they grew up. Their formation has focused on the meaning of their baptism and the elements that helped form the unbaptized listed above.

The second group of people are those who were baptized in another Christian tradition and who wish to be received into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church. Their formation is designed around what they need to live a Catholic Christian life (#477, RCIA).

The rite for both these groups includes an affirmation of their growth in understanding of the Catholic tradition, of their appreciation of their baptism, and advancement in a “life of love and service” by both their sponsors and the assembly gathered. The Archbishop then recognizes their desire and calls them to join the church in the Lenten observances. In St. Louis, we will have two celebrations of these rites in 2025.

Saturday, March 8 at 1:30 pm
Sunday, March 9 at 2:30 pm

This year, the new translation of the rite from the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults will be used. Mandatory use of the new edition becomes effective on March 5. Ash Wednesday, this year. If you have not obtained a copy of the new edition, please do so before Lent begins.

Registration for the rite is available by contacting Joe Milner at Joemilner@archstl.org

RECLAMATION



RARE OR UNUSUAL ITEMS

By: Deacon John Stoverink, Director of the Reclamation Center

In the fall of 2022, the family of a Jesuit priest donated several of his personal items to the Reclamation Center. In spring of 2023, two retired Jesuit priests were looking through the chalices; they became very excited when they came across one particular chalice. This chalice belonged to the priest that was involved with 1940’s Exorcism of Roland Doe in Saint Louis. The movie “The Exorcist” was based on this event. The chalice was been returned to Saint Louis University where it is being exhibited

The Reclamation Center is open on Wednesdays from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm. For further information, please visit the [Reclamation Center catalog](#).

NEWS



Upcoming Lenten and Easter Season

Click [HERE](#) for the Lenten Observance Guidelines of the Archdiocese of St. Louis.

Important Dates:

Ash Wednesday: March 5, 2025
Holy Thursday: April 17, 2025
Good Friday: April 18, 2025
Holy Saturday: April 19, 2025
Easter Sunday: April 20, 2025

Important Reminders:

Ash Wednesday (March 5, 2025) and Good Friday (April 18, 2025) is a day of **abstinence** (refraining from meat) for **all Catholics from age 14 onwards**. On this day, fasting, as well as **abstinence**, is also obligatory for those from the **ages of 18-59**. Abstinence means refraining from meat. Fasting means one full meal a day, with two smaller meals and nothing between meals (liquids are permitted). No Catholic will lightly excuse himself or herself from this obligation.

Please contact our Office with any questions at worship@archstl.org. Thank you for all you do to support the liturgical life of the Church in your parish, school, office, agency, and home.



ARCHDIOCESE OF ST. LOUIS
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20 Archbishop May Drive | St. Louis, MO 63119
314.792.7231 | liturgynotes@archstl.org
www.archstl.org/sacred-worship

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