

## On daily Mass, anointing, and health reform

Joshua J. McElwee | Oct. 30, 2009 NCR Today

As part of my routine living at the Holy Family Catholic Worker house I frequently attend daily Mass at a local parish with one of my other community members.

Normally the Mass is quick and dirty. The prayers are read back-to-back, the homily is short, and there's not much time to let your mind wander. It's just a short little break in the day ? not too long as to interrupt the rest of your plans.

This past Tuesday was a little different. In addition to the normal liturgy of the Eucharist we also celebrated the liturgy of anointing ? allowing people who felt a particular need for healing to come forward and receive the mark of oil and the support of their friends.

This time the Mass was slow, even deliberate. We weren't at a waypoint stop from the hustle and bustle of the rest of the day. We were gathered to take the time and effort to help those with health needs.

In this gentler pace I couldn't help but feel something of a message for a Catholic understanding of healing: that we are to find ways to help those who are suffering from illness by slowing down and taking the time needed to acknowledge and confront their pain.

As people from the congregation went up to receive their mark of oil the priest said to each of them, ?through this holy anointing may the Lord, in his love and mercy, help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit.?

The priest didn't ask for them to be provided with the right medication. He didn't call out for new surgeries or procedures. He merely asked for help ? of whatever kind needed.

Perhaps our guideline as health insurance reform continues should be this simple question to those who are suffering: how can we help?

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