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-- Like good boy scouts, most of us like to be prepared when we set out on a journey or undertake a task. Most of all, we want to be in control of the situation. We want to know what is likely to happen.

-- Yet, when Jesus sent out disciples ahead of him, he didn't seem to prepare them very well. He failed to give them even the basic essentials for their travels. Rather, he expected them to rely on the goodness of the people they would meet.

-- Any of us would feel like we were not in control of the situation if we were sent out on a mission this way. When I go on my two week walk in Spain this October, I'll have someone to transport my bags, and my accommodations will be set ahead of time.

-- Yet, there is one thing that can strip us of control of our life situation, and that is illness. When we are sick, we can't do much for ourselves. We are more dependent upon others. We become more like those disciples, reliant on the goodness of people around us.

-- The Church recognizes the needs of those who are sick, and provides for them through the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. This sacrament provides healing to those seriously ill in mind and body.

-- At times, that healing is physical. But even if no physical healing takes place, the sick person always experiences spiritual healing when he/she receives the sacrament in true faith.

-- At one time, this anointing was reserved for those in more immediate danger of death (Extreme Unction). But now, the sacrament can be received by anyone who is seriously ill. God's healing grace is abundant, and the Church wishes to share that grace generously.

-- Through this sacrament, we follow the example of Jesus himself, who healed numerous sick people who came to him. And his healing wasn't just physical; the most important healing he provided was spiritual.

-- When Jesus sent out his disciples in the gospel, he told them to cure the sick and proclaim God's care and rule over them. And that power

was effective in the disciples, as they reported to Jesus when they returned from their journey.

-- When I anoint a sick person, I use a prayer that has two parts. First I say, *Through this holy anointing may the Lord in his goodness help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit.* This tells us that God continues to work through the Spirit today, particularly by healing the sick.

-- Then I say *May the Lord who frees you from sin save you and raise you up.* This part of the prayer stresses that the most important healing which takes place is healing from the power of sin—spiritual healing.

-- Any of you who have been anointed certainly know the power of this sacrament. I see that so often when I administer it to a sick person who puts faith in God's healing mercy. It's not uncommon that someone who is barely conscious will "perk up" when he or she is anointed.

-- God's healing power is not just something reserved to biblical times, or for a few miracles which have taken place since then. God's healing is still abundant in the world. The Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick is one major way we see this healing take place.

-- May we rejoice in the Lord's healing power in this sacrament. For it is one great way by which God brings us closer to the Kingdom of God.