

SUNDAY, MARCH 15, 2026

4TH SUNDAY OF LENT

AT-HOME PRAYER GUIDE

1. Say the Entrance Antiphon:

Rejoice, Jerusalem, and all who love her.
Be joyful, all who were in mourning.
exult and be satisfied at her consoling breast.

2. Make the Sign of the Cross

3. Take a moment to acknowledge your sins and your need of God's grace and mercy, then pray:

Lord Jesus, you heal the contrite of heart.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you came to call sinners.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you are seated at the right hand of the Father to intercede for us.

Lord, have mercy.

May almighty God have mercy on us,
forgive us our sins,
and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

4. O God, who through your Word

reconcile the human race to yourself in a wonderful way,
grant, we pray,

that with prompt devotion and eager faith
the Christian people may hasten
toward the solemn celebrations to come.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, forever and ever.

Amen.

5. A reading from the first Book of Samuel.

(16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a)

The LORD said to Samuel:

“Fill your horn with oil, and be on your way.

I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem,
for I have chosen my king from among his sons.”

As Jesse and his sons came to the sacrifice,

Samuel looked at Eliab and thought,

“Surely the LORD’s anointed is here before him.”

But the LORD said to Samuel:

“Do not judge from his appearance or from his lofty stature,
because I have rejected him.

Not as man sees does God see,

because man sees the appearance

but the LORD looks into the heart.”

In the same way Jesse presented seven sons before Samuel,

but Samuel said to Jesse,

“The LORD has not chosen any one of these.”

Then Samuel asked Jesse,

“Are these all the sons you have?”

Jesse replied,

“There is still the youngest, who is tending the sheep.”

Samuel said to Jesse,

“Send for him;

we will not begin the sacrificial banquet until he arrives here.”

Jesse sent and had the young man brought to them.

He was ruddy, a youth handsome to behold

and making a splendid appearance.

The LORD said,

“There—anoint him, for this is the one!”

Then Samuel, with the horn of oil in hand,

anointed David in the presence of his brothers;

and from that day on, the spirit of the LORD rushed upon David.

The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

6. **The LORD is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.** (Ps 23: 1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6)

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

In verdant pastures he gives me repose;
beside restful waters he leads me;
he refreshes my soul.

R. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

He guides me in right paths
for his name's sake.
Even though I walk in the dark valley
I fear no evil; for you are at my side
With your rod and your staff
that give me courage.

R. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

You spread the table before me
in the sight of my foes;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

R. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

Only goodness and kindness follow me
all the days of my life;
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
for years to come.

R. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

7. A reading from the Letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians.

(5:8-14)

Brothers and sisters:
You were once darkness,
but now you are light in the Lord.
Live as children of light,
for light produces every kind of goodness
and righteousness and truth.
Try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.
Take no part in the fruitless works of darkness;
rather expose them, for it is shameful even to mention
the things done by them in secret;
but everything exposed by the light becomes visible,
for everything that becomes visible is light.
Therefore, it says:
“Awake, O sleeper,
and arise from the dead,
and Christ will give you light.”

The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

8. “Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ, King of endless glory!”

I am the light of the world, says the Lord;
whoever follows me will have the light of life.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ, King of endless glory!

9. A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

(9:1, 6-9, 13-17, 34-38)

As Jesus passed by he saw a man blind from birth.
He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva,
and smeared the clay on his eyes,
and said to him,
“Go wash in the Pool of Siloam” — which means Sent —.
So he went and washed, and came back able to see.

His neighbors and those who had seen him earlier as a beggar said,
“Isn’t this the one who used to sit and beg?”

Some said, “It is, “

but others said, “No, he just looks like him.”

He said, “I am.”

They brought the one who was once blind to the Pharisees.

Now Jesus had made clay and opened his eyes on a sabbath.

So then the Pharisees also asked him how he was able to see.

He said to them,

“He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and now I can see.”

So some of the Pharisees said,

“This man is not from God,
because he does not keep the sabbath.”

But others said,

“How can a sinful man do such signs?”

And there was a division among them.

So they said to the blind man again,

“What do you have to say about him,
since he opened your eyes?”

He said, “He is a prophet.”

They answered and said to him,

“You were born totally in sin,
and are you trying to teach us?”

Then they threw him out.

When Jesus heard that they had thrown him out,

he found him and said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”

He answered and said,

“Who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?”

Jesus said to him,

“You have seen him, and
the one speaking with you is he.”

He said,

“I do believe, Lord,” and he worshiped him.

The Gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

10. Reflection on the readings.

Our covenant with God is experienced in some concrete ways. This Sunday, that covenant comes through the Scriptures in the form of anointing. Anointing is when something is smeared upon us, and pressed into us. Anointing used to be called (and it still can be called) “unction.” And “unction” means a “union,” or a “bringing together.” When we’re anointed, we become one with whatever we’re being anointed with. When it comes to being anointed with Holy Oil, it’s the grace of God which we’re brought into union with. Anointing confirms and strengthens our union—our covenant—with God. It literally makes us one.

So, anointing is another concrete way we experience our covenant with the Lord. But if we look at our Holy Oils, there isn’t just one: there’s three—the Oil of the Sick, the Oil of Catechumens, and the Sacred Chrism. They each have a different purpose, but those purposes are rooted in a single main purpose; namely, living our life with God, today and forever.

In biblical times, anointing was most often done with olive oil. And that’s what we still use today. Homer (the author of the “Iliad” and the “Odyssey”) called olive oil “liquid gold.” Hippocrates called it “the great healer.” And he and other ancient doctors recognized the many health benefits of olive oil. Even today, those same benefits are recognized, and dozens of ancient uses for olive oil are still promoted. The olive branch, too, is a long-recognized sign of peace. So, there are lots of reasons why olive oil continues to be the oil of choice for anointing. Its connections to health and peace and so closely tied to God’s promises of heaven to those anointed with his grace.

In Psalm 23, we heard today, “You spread the table before me in the sight of my foes; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.” Anointing had a strong connection with eating and hospitality. In biblical times, a guest would be welcomed by having their head anointed with oil. It was a gesture of comfort and kindness, having just come in from the harsh desert climate. In our culture, of course, we don’t do exactly that. But we do “anoint” people with gestures of comfort, kindness, and welcome as guests.

Somebody comes over and we give our guest not just any chair to sit in, but the comfortable chair. We offer to get them something to drink. We offer to take

their coat. We give them a hug and smile. We may not anoint our guests with oil, but we do “anoint” them with our hospitality. It’s why, when Jesus was a guest at the Pharisee’s house in the gospel of Luke, he criticized the Pharisee for not anointing Jesus’ head. The Pharisee was being inhospitable to Jesus. Being anointed with the Oil of Catechumens—which we’ve been anointed with—is a sign to us that God has welcomed us. He “no longer calls us slaves, but friends.” We have been anointed with the oil of divine welcome. God says, “Welcome to my covenant with you.”

Anointing also has the effect of setting something apart for the service of God. Church buildings are anointed—they’re consecrated and dedicated—to the purposes of God. Altars are, too. Oil is smeared upon them; they’re claimed as belonging to God. They’re set aside for a sacred purpose. And the same happens with people.

In the First Book of Samuel today, we heard that “Samuel, with the horn of oil in hand, anointed David in the presence of his brothers; and from that day on, the spirit of the Lord rushed upon David.” When we were baptized, we not only had the Oil of Catechumens—the “oil of God’s welcome”—pressed upon us, we were also anointed with the Sacred Chrism, which is perfumed olive oil. That anointing consecrated us as God’s own sons and daughters through Jesus. We are precious in the eyes of God; he has anointed us and made us his own. His love for us has not only washed over by the living waters of baptism, his love has also been pressed into us by anointing. And no matter the sins and mistakes we make in life, that anointing never goes away. It’s a permanent seal of God’s commitment to us, and our commitment to him.

And this really should affect how we view each other. Our covenant with God isn’t just between “me and God.” This covenant also “makes” the Church what it is; namely, a community of the consecrated: a community of brothers and sisters who are equally loved by the Father through the Son. If God loves our neighbor, if God has anointed the person sitting next to us, or ahead of us, or five pews behind us, or even in the next church ten miles away, then we have a sacred duty to try to see them as God sees them, and to love them as God does. (And remember that “to love” is not the same as “to like.”)

It’s when people are sick, especially, that we want to remember our duty to them as fellow friends of God. It’s why we celebrate the Anointing of the Sick

as a community at least once a year. It's a sign of our shared dedication to God and his people.

And we see the beginnings of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick in the gospel today. We heard that Jesus "spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva, and smeared the clay on [the blind man's] eyes." Now, when we celebrate the Anointing of the Sick today, we're going to be using the Oil of the Sick. But this scene from the gospel is important; it sheds some light on what's happening in the sacrament.

Jesus didn't use oil to anoint the man's eyes. But that's because God *himself* was the one doing the anointing. Oil is used by *us* as a *sign* of God's living presence. Oil is something of a *stand-in* for God's presence. But if God *himself* is the one doing the anointing, he doesn't need oil to represent him. He's already there. And so, his own saliva did just fine in the gospel story today. But this shows us something wonderful: that this anointing with Holy Oil is an anointing with the Spirit of God himself.

In the act of anointing, God himself is present. In the act of anointing, God himself is present. Through oil, he welcomes, he consecrates us for his own, and he heals us. Through oil, we experience God's covenant with us.

11. Take time to reflect on the readings and homily, then profess your faith:

I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting.
Amen.

12. Intercessions

We pray for the Church, her shepherds, leaders, and all the faithful: that by our words and actions, we will “anoint” others with the grace and mercy of God’s presence in the world. We pray to the Lord... Lord, hear our prayer.

For local, state, and national leaders, and leaders of all nations: that difficult decisions that affect the lives of many will be made with wisdom, prudence, justice, and charity. We pray to the Lord... Lord, hear our prayer.

For those who are in need of God’s healing grace, including those on our Prayer Chain, for ourselves, and those we hold in thought and prayer. We pray to the Lord... Lord, hear our prayer.

For all catechumens and candidates as they prepare for full initiation in the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil. We pray to the Lord... Lord, hear our prayer.

For all those who are impacted by severe weather and other natural calamities and difficulties. We pray to the Lord... Lord, hear our prayer.

For the prayers I offer to the Lord from the altar of my heart today... [insert your own intentions]. We pray to the Lord... Lord, hear our prayer.

And for all the faithful departed: may the Good Shepherd lead them home to heavenly glory. We pray to the Lord... Lord, hear our prayer.

13. Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful
and kindle in them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created,
and you shall renew the face of the earth.

O God, who have taught the hearts of the faithful
by the light of the Holy Spirit,
grant that in the same Spirit we may be truly wise
and ever rejoice in his consolation.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Our Lady of Champion, pray for us.
Saint Francis Xavier, pray for us.
Saint Therese of Lisieux, pray for us.

14. Our Father, who art in heaven...

15. Spiritual Communion Prayer

My Jesus,
I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.
I love You above all things,
and I desire to receive You into my soul.
Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally,
come at least spiritually into my heart.
I embrace You as if You were already there
and unite myself wholly to You.
Never permit me to be separated from You.
Amen.

16. Make the Sign of the Cross while saying:

May the Lord bless us,
protect us from all evil,
and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.