



Archdiocese of San Antonio

2718 W. Woodlawn Ave. San Antonio, TX 78228
(210) 734-2620 www.archsa.org

INSTRUCTION ON PRAYER MINISTRY AND THE LAITY IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF SAN ANTONIO

Introduction: Prayer is the calling of every member of the Church since Baptism initiates us into the one Body of Christ and commissions us as a priestly people to care for one another by prayer as well as action. Prayer Ministry is an important component of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Movement and can be an important aspect of evangelization for all the laity. Individuals and prayer teams aid those seeking interior peace, healing, and spiritual enrichment.

This instruction offers guidance for those participating in this evangelistic ministry. Prayer Ministry differs from Deliverance Ministry, which is not specially addressed in this Instruction. For a more complete understanding of the Charismatic Renewal Prayer Ministry in the Archdiocese of San Antonio, individuals are highly encouraged to attend specified training. Information regarding such training is located at the end of this document.

The Call to Be Missionary Disciples: Pope Francis has called all the faithful to be “missionary disciples”: *“In virtue of their baptism, all members of the People of God have become missionary disciples. The baptized, regardless of their position in the Church or level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization, and it would be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelization to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients”* (#120, *Evangeli Gaudium (EG)*, 2013).

Pope Francis writes that personal evangelization can involve *“personal dialogue, sharing your faith, presenting the message directly, a gesture, or in any way that the Holy Spirit may suggest in a particular situation, which can include a prayer related to the concerns which the person may have expressed* (EG, #128).

Scriptures: In the Gospels, Jesus gives his apostles authority to proclaim the Gospel and pray for healing (Lk 9:1-6), but he also appoints seventy-two other disciples to proclaim the gospel and to cure the sick, explaining that the harvest is rich, but the laborers are few (Lk 10:1-9).

Before his Ascension, Jesus commissions the eleven apostles to proclaim the Gospel and to baptize. He then says, *“these signs will accompany those who believe in my name they will drive out demons, they will speak in new tongues... They will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover”* (Mk 16:15-18). These signs are not only for the apostles, but for all those who believe.

In the Letter of James (5:14-16) we read about the anointing of the sick, where people are called to summon the presbyters (priests) who will pray over them and anoint them for healing. This is followed by a call to all the faithful to *“Pray for one another, that you may be healed. The fervent pray of a righteous person is very powerful.”*



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Church Documents: On September 14, 2000, the Vatican Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith published a document entitled, *Instruction on Prayers for Healing*. In reflecting on the New Testament Scriptures, the document states, “*The wondrous healings are not limited to the activity of the Apostles and certain of the central figures in the first preaching of the Gospel.*” It explains that some people can be given a “*charism of healing*” (1 Cor 12:9, 28, 30), where healing happens by means of prayer, perhaps accompanied by some symbolic gesture (3.3). The document recognizes the “charism of healing,” and supports “special prayer meetings organized for the purpose of obtaining wondrous healings among the sick who are present” (5.1).

These *Disciplinary Norms* are offered in the document:

Art. 1 - It is licit for every member of the faithful to pray to God for healing.

Art. 5 – Non-liturgical prayers for healing are distinct from liturgical celebrations...these also fall under the vigilance of the local Ordinary in accordance with can. 839.2. The document affirms the positive nature of these gatherings, and gives some cautions: “Anything resembling hysteria, artificiality, theatricality or sensationalism, above all on the part of those who are in charge of such gatherings, must not take place.”

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* has a section explaining and encouraging the use of the charisms (#799-801) by all the faithful and mentions the charism of healing: “The Holy Spirit gives to some a special charism of healing so as to make manifest the power of the grace of the risen Lord” (#1508).

Issues Related to Prayer Ministry of the Laity: Pope Francis has made CHARIS (International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services) a part of the Vatican Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life. The Dicastery has confirmed several documents originating from CHARIS related to prayer ministry. The Doctrinal Commission for CHARIS published *Guidelines on Prayers for Healing* (2007), based on an international colloquium on healing prayer, which brought together Vatican officials, theologians, and people experienced in healing prayer ministry.

Guidelines were given for healing services and individuals praying for healing. They included: 1) Have expectant faith but leave the outcome in God’s hands; 2) When no perceptible healing occurs, do not blame the ill person for lack of faith, but encourage to them to persevere in prayer and trust; 3) Be thankful and joyful, but prudently cautious in verifying healings; 4) Focus not so much on the healings as on the Divine Healer; 5) Recognize healing in the context of evangelization.

Full healing includes: 1. A new identity in Christ; 2. Healing (physical, mental, spiritual); 3. Empowerment by the Holy Spirit; 4. Spirit of obedience to Church authorities, who seek not to stifle the Spirit, but to test/discern; Discernment of words of knowledge (a charism of spiritually sensing how the Spirit is acting); and 5. Healing is submitted to the test of sound doctrine and practical common sense.



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Laying on of Hands: CHARIS published a document called “Can the Laying on of Hands Be Done by Lay People?” (2015). In the Scriptures this gesture is used as a way of parents blessing their children; to consecrate people for ministry; and to pray for healing. The risen Lord promises that believers “will lay hands on the sick and they will recover” (Mk 16:18). The laying of hands is used for imparting the fullness of the Holy Spirit; ordination of presbyters and deacons; but also, by ordinary believers like Ananias who lays hands on Saul to recover from his blindness (Acts 9:17). It is important that this practice is taught well and clearly understood, so there is no confusion between sacramental and simple (informal) laying on of hands. A person should ask permission before making physical contact with the person. The best practice is to touch only the shoulder.

Healing prayer is a “flowering” or a “stirring into a flame” of the sacramental graces of Baptism and Confirmation. This prayer is often accompanied by the gesture of laying on of hands, which the Church has accepted as an appropriate gesture for laity and the ordained ministers in praying for a fuller reception of the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Pope Francis, in following St. Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI, has said that prayer for baptism in the Holy Spirit is meant for the whole Church. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (#1231) states, “By its very nature infant baptism requires a post baptismal catechumenate. Not only is there a need for instruction after Baptism, but also for the necessary flowering of baptismal grace in personal growth.”

Blessed Water and Oil: It is an accepted practice in the Church to have the laity use water and oil blessed by a priest or deacon for blessings, protection, purification, and healing (cf. Roman Ritual, p. 393, no.3). When using blessed oil, the word “anointing,” is to be avoided, since people can confuse this oil with the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. Those applying blessed oil, which is understood as a sacramental, are to place it only on the forehead, and not on the hands, to prevent confusion with the liturgical rubrics specified in the Rite for the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.

Healing Ministry with Minors: When minors are present for any type of healing service, those conducting the service must be safe environment trained and follow the *Archdiocesan Code of Conduct* and the *Policy for Ministering to Minors*. Minors can never participate in any type of prayer ministry events, unless accompanied by their parent/legal guardian.

Training: Reverend Bob Hogan, BBD, Director of the Catholic Center for Charismatic Renewal for the Archdiocese of San Antonio, offers a course for parishes and prayer groups entitled, *Prayer Team Ministry*. The program trains individuals or teams of two, in prayer ministry. The course consists of ten sessions that can be presented on two Saturdays or in a Saturday-Sunday weekend format. This course is also helpful for those who visit the sick and those who bring the Eucharist to the sick. Pastors may also utilize trained individuals and/or teams to pray individually with people after a monthly Anointing of the Sick Mass or after a particular Sunday Mass. For further assistance, and for training courses, email Father Hogan at: robert.hogan@archsa.org.

Approved by Archbishop Gustavo Garcia-Siller, MSPS. on October 18, 2024.