

For Lent, we started doing healing anointing during Holy Eucharist on Sundays. We are inviting people, as they deem necessary, to come to the back of the church and be anointed, as they offer their own brokenness to God.

I will admit, at first I wasn't sure I wanted to do this. It's very meaningful to distribute communion, and offering healing anointing meant I wouldn't be able to distribute communion.

But then, when it was my turn (Deacon Pam, Fr. Eric, and I take turns), offering healing anointing was so meaningful. Perhaps more meaningful than offering communion.

Now, don't get me wrong—I still very much love to intimacy of offering each of you a small piece of Jesus—as a reminder that you are so loved that God gave God's only Son, whom we remember through the Holy Eucharist, giving thanks to God every Sunday. As each person steps forward, I make a point to look you straight in the eye, and I do my best not to look away (not to be distracted by the sights and sounds around me), until you have said, "Amen," and stepped away.

Offering healing anointing seemed to do something similar, but perhaps on an even more intimate level. As people chose to come forward, sometimes I knew why you stood in front of me, and sometimes I did not. Sometimes you had tears in your eyes (often making my own eyes a bit more watery); sometimes you shook a little (or maybe that was me, in my nervousness). Sometimes, you stepped forward and truly offered to God alone what was on your heart.

One of the hardest parts of being a priest is also one of the most special—being invited to witness the parts of life that create the most emotion. Be it a wedding or a baptism, creating emotions of hope and joy; or a funeral or healing unction, creating emotions of fear and pain. I see it as a gift that all of you offer to me—as you invite me into those very intimate spaces.

I pray that, whatever you are offering to God this Lenten season—be it petitions for healing or confessions of brokenness or something else entirely—I pray that your Lenten journey has been fruitful. I pray that you accept the invitation to be present to God's most intimate moments during Holy Week. And I pray that you will more fully embrace the joy of the Easter Resurrection.

And I thank you for opening up yourselves and your lives to me and Deacon Pam and Fr. Eric. It is a true gift that you all offer to us, as we try to offer God as a reflection back to you.