

Charlie's Anointing



Charlie sat quietly in his wheelchair. He adjusted his baseball cap. He wore the cap for two reasons. First, he was proud to still be a member of his baseball team. Second, the cap covered his bald head. Chemotherapy had caused Charlie to lose all his hair.

At first, when his family and teammates asked if they could celebrate the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick with him, Charlie wasn't sure. Then, Father Mike called and suggested celebrating the Sacrament outside on the parish baseball field. Charlie said, "Sure! That sounds cool."

Charlie's mom and dad and sisters were there. His whole baseball team was there, too -- in uniform. Father Mike walked over from the church. He was dressed in an alb and a stole.

"I can't think of a better place to celebrate the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick with Charlie than right here where he used to pitch. And I can't think of a better community to celebrate with him than you -- his family, his teammates, and his friends. You share more with Charlie than his love of baseball. You share his faith."

Charlie was a little embarrassed when Father Mike asked him to take off his cap but after a moment of hesitation, Charlie did so. Father Mike placed his hands on Charlie's head and said a prayer of thanks to God for the gift of oil. Then he anointed Charlie's head with the oil as he said, "Through this holy anointing, may the Lord in his love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit."

Charlie, his family and his friends all answered "Amen!" Charlie thought that the oil felt good -- even on his bald head. It smelled good, too.

Then Father Mike anointed Charlie's hands as he said, "Charlie, may the Lord who frees you from sin save you and raise you up."

After the prayer there were shouts and cheers. The baseball team took off their caps and sent them flying into the air. Charlie felt part of the team again. Charlie looked at the flying baseball caps. Then he looked at his cheering friends.

Every one of them was bald!