

Anointing of the Sick



In the Catholic Church there are seven sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Reconciliation (Penance), Anointing of the Sick, Marriage, and Holy Orders. Each of these sacraments was re-examined at the Second Vatican Council and underwent some revision. The Sacrament of the Sick used to be called *Extreme Unction* but was changed to indicate its proper emphasis on those who are seriously ill rather than those who are dying. This anointing with oil is a biblical practice found in the Letter of James: “*Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the presbyters (priest) of the church, and let them pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.*” James 5:14-15

It simply refers to the sick.

When Jesus (and the Apostles) performed miraculous healings, the person was strengthened body and soul. In the prayer of the Anointing of the Sick we ask for physical and spiritual healing. The act of anointing with oil is a sign of strengthening. We also pray for those who care for the sick and injured; physicians, surgeons, nurses, family and friends. Anointing strengthens us in the experience of God’s care for us in our time of need.

Catholics with serious medical conditions participate in the Sacrament of the Sick.

A person with a cold or flu or minor injury is not usually anointed unless such illness or injury has a serious nature due to other pre-existing situations. Surgery is presumed to involve serious malady and significant risk; those scheduled for surgery (especially when general anesthesia is used) ought to be anointed beforehand. A person is usually anointed only once in the course of an illness or injury. However, those suffering from illnesses of a long duration or due to advancing age may be anointed periodically and especially if their condition worsens.

WHAT TO DO

If you or your loved one are experiencing serious illness or facing surgery, please call your parish office, and ask for the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.

If you or your loved one is in the hospital, ask a nurse or staff person or hospital chaplain to contact a priest so you can receive the Sacrament of the Sick.

Communal Celebrations

The Sacrament IS NOT primarily a sacrament for emergencies! Communal celebrations of the anointing of the sick are a regular feature of parish life in many places. Such celebrations may take place at Sunday or daily Eucharist, or outside Mass when it is judged to be pastorally suitable. Outside these communal celebrations, individuals should be encouraged to seek the anointing whenever they face serious illness or surgery because of such illness.

What happens if in the danger of death a priest is unavailable?

It is not reasonable to expect that a priest will always be available for the Sacrament of the Sick. If a person seeks a priest and a priest cannot be reasonably found in time, it suffices for the person to make an act of contrition – no one who calls on the Lord will be rejected. In such cases, we have to trust in God, remembering that God does not reject any who call on him.



Viaticum (Holy Communion) for the Dying

The “Last Sacrament” of the Church is not the sacrament of Anointing of the Sick. It is the last Eucharist, or “Viaticum,” which literally means “with you on the journey.”

For this reason the Church encourages the reception of Holy Communion as one approaches death. The person who would receive Viaticum must be in possession of his or her faculties. This “food for the journey” strengthens us with the pledge of resurrection. “*Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day*” John 6:54

Viaticum may be brought by a priest, a deacon, or a suitably trained lay person, either man or woman using the special rite for Viaticum.

ACT OF CONTRITION

My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good, I have sinned against you whom I should love above all things. I firmly intend, with your help, to do penance, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin. Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us. In his name, my God, have mercy.

OUR FATHER

Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. **Amen.**

HAIL MARY

Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. **Amen.**

GLORY BE

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. **Amen.**