

*We know that affliction makes for endurance and endurance for tested virtue and tested virtue for hope. And this hope will not leave us disappointed.*

ROMANS 5:3B-4

# ANOINTING OF THE SICK

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## ANOINTING OF THE SICK

### I. INTRODUCTION

“Are any among you sick? They should call for the priests of the Church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of the faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone, who has committed sins will be forgiven.” (James 5:14-16)

By the sacred anointing of the sick and prayer of the priests the whole Church commends those who are ill to the suffering and glorified Lord, that he may raise them up and save them. And indeed she exhorts them to contribute to the good of the People of God by freely uniting themselves to the Passion and death of Christ.

One of the greatest challenges we have as a Church is to continue the work of Jesus’ healing. The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick seeks to convey the presence of Christ to those who are ill. Care of the sick is more than a single celebration of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. Illness may be the occasion for an individual to become reconciled with God once again and to find peace in their life with God and with all those around them.

The purpose of the sacrament is to pray for healing. “The sacrament gives the grace of the Holy Spirit to those who are sick: by this grace the whole person is helped and saved, sustained by trust in God, and strengthened against the temptations of the Evil One, and against anxiety over death. Thus the sick person is able not only to bear suffering bravely, but also to fight against it. A return to physical health may follow the reception of this sacrament if it will be beneficial to the sick person’s salvation.” (*PCS*, 6) The healing and forgiveness of sins brought about by the sacrament enables the sick person to find peace and reconciliation with God and the community. In celebrating the sacrament, the sick person has the opportunity to experience the love and care of the Church. At the same time the celebration of the sacrament can also help family and friends accept the fact of illness or aging and face it in a caring and compassionate manner. Thus through the Sacrament of Anointing Christ’s ministry of healing and compassion is made present in today’s world.

## II. ANOINTING

- AN 1. Every parish shall provide opportunities for the sick and elderly of the community to receive the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick in a timely manner.**

The sick person, a family member, or caregiver, should contact a priest if one of the faithful needs the anointing of the sick. If the sick person so desires, family members should be encouraged to be present in order to join in the prayer for the sick person.

- AN 2. A person may be anointed a number of times during the course of an illness, especially if the illness is prolonged. The sacrament can be repeated whenever the sick person again falls into serious sickness after convalescence or whenever a more serious crisis develops during the same illness (see *CIC*, c. 1004 §2; Health Care Ministry: HC, VIII, “Pastoral Care, Continuous Rites for Those in Danger of Death”).**

## III. RECIPIENT OF THE SACRAMENT

- AN 3. Great care is to be taken to see that those of the faithful whose health is seriously impaired by sickness or advanced age receive the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. A prudent judgment is sufficient for deciding the seriousness of the illness. On the one hand, the sacrament may and should be given to anyone whose health is seriously impaired; on the other hand, it may not be given indiscriminately or to any person whose health is not seriously impaired (see *PCS*, 8).**
- AN 4. A sick person may be anointed before surgery whenever a serious illness is the reason for the surgery (see *PCS*, 10).**
- AN 5. “Sick children are to be anointed if they have sufficient use of reason to be strengthened by this sacrament. In case of doubt whether a child has reached the use of reason, the sacrament is to be conferred.” (*PCS*, 12) If a sick child has not reached the age of reason, the blessings given in the Pastoral Care of the Sick for a “Visit to a Sick Child” may be used (see *PCS*, 62-70).**
- AN 6. “The sacrament of anointing is to be conferred on sick people who, although they have lost consciousness or the use of reason, would, as Christian believers, have at least implicitly asked for it when they were in control of their faculties.” (*PCS*, 14)**

**AN 7. “When a priest has been called to attend those who are already dead, he should not administer the sacrament of anointing. Instead, he should pray for them asking that God forgive their sins and graciously receive them into the kingdom. But if a priest is doubtful whether the sick person is dead, he is to confer the sacrament using the appropriate rite.” (PCS, 15)**

The following are some pastoral considerations concerning the recipient of the Anointing of the Sick:

- A person who suffers from severe mental illness may also be anointed. Mental illness can be severe as physical illness and equally draining of a person’s strength and energy.
- As circumstances suggest, the priest is to provide the opportunity to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation as part of the celebration of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. Once a person is at peace within himself/herself and at peace with God, the person may deal with the illness better.
- Some people, who may have been divorced and remarried, or alienation from the church for another reason, may have been away from the Church for some time. Illness may serve as a catalyst for returning to the Church. The priest is to make every effort to show the love and concern of the Church for them in the midst of their illness and provide for their reconciliation with the Church.
- If a person is in danger of death and with a contrite heart wishes to return to the Church, the priest may celebrate the Sacrament of Penance along with the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick with the person.

#### IV. THE MINISTER

**AN 8. The bishop or priest is the only proper minister of the Anointing of the Sick (see PCS, 16; CIC, c. 1003 §1).**

**AN 9. Unless prevented by health or some other serious reason, priests are to respond generously to calls to minister the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick or Viaticum even when called during the night.**

Priests, particularly Pastors and Parochial Vicars, and Priest Chaplains of hospitals should remember that it is their duty to care

for the sick by personal visits and other acts of kindness. By bringing the Church's love and the consolation of faith, they comfort believers and raise the minds of others to God (see *PCS*, 35).

**AN 10. Priests of deaneries and other regional grouping of parishes are to organize themselves to ensure continuous day and night coverage of sick calls. The deans are to ensure that a priest is available for the sacrament in their deaneries through organizational planning among parishes, groupings of parishes and coverage of nearby hospitals, nursing facilities and other health institutions.**

**AN 11. Deacons and lay ministers are to be encouraged to take a significant role in the pastoral care of the sick. By their visits and assistance in administering Holy Communion they bring the care and witness of the Christian community. Those who minister in an official capacity are to be given appropriate training and supervision so that they may be effective pastoral ministers. They are to receive training in the cultural customs of the people to whom they minister (see *CIC*, c. 911 §2).**

**AN 12. In order to avoid confusion with the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, Deacons and lay ministers are not to use blessed oil, or other types of oil under any circumstances in the course of their visits (see *CIC*, c. 1003).**

## V. THE COMMUNAL CELEBRATION

**AN 13. A communal service of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick should be offered in each parish at least once a year. When the Anointing of the Sick is administered communally, Pastors are to carefully instruct the faithful on the meaning and significance of the sacrament and that the sacrament is not to be received indiscriminately. The faithful are to be instructed that only those whose physical or mental health is seriously impaired or those who have reached advanced age are able to receive the sacrament (see AN 6 for criteria for recipients of the sacrament).**