

# Guide to the Anointing of the Sick

"Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the priests of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord." - James 5:14

## First, A Note About the Sacraments

The seven sacraments of the Church are given to us by Christ to receive His grace. They are not our attempts to earn God's love, but rather are the works God does to freely give His divine life. They are **redemptive**, for in them the Holy Spirit applies Christ's saving work to us. We must **receive** these gifts as faithful disciples who are prepared and sincere in our devotion to God.

## A Sacrament for the Sick

Bodily infirmities can so overwhelm us that our spiritual health is hindered, leading some into despair and sin. Those who suffer know this, which intensifies when an illness ends in death. Christ gave us this Sacrament to remedy sin's effects and to increase the grace of those near death. Moreover, *"by the grace of this Sacrament the whole person is helped and saved, sustained by trust in God, and strengthened against the temptation 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."* (Pastoral Care of the Sick)

## The Anointing of the Sick

This sacrament is for a member of the faithful who, having reached the use of reason, **begins to be in danger of death by illness or old age**. This is liturgical and communal, whether celebrated at home, in a hospital, or a church. The priest in silence lays hands on the sick person and prays over them. Then he anoints the head and hands with blessed oil. It can be preceded by Confession and followed by the Eucharist. Depending on the form used, there may be a Liturgy of the Word or done within the Holy Mass.

## The Timing of the Sacrament

Do not defer the anointing until hope of recovery is lost and reason is impaired, or when the priest may not be able to make it in time. This is why the Church says, **"begins to be in danger of death"**. The hope is to administer to the person conscious and lucid, able to make acts of faith and piety. Please review the following and if you should need the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, contact the parish soon to set up an appointment with the priest.

## Who Should Receive This Sacrament?

*A member of the faithful who, having reached the use of reason, begins to be in danger of death by illness or old age.*

- Illness is *serious*, meaning it may lead to death
- Before surgery for serious illness, going under general anesthesia, except for purely elective cosmetic surgery
- High-risk pregnancies
- Children, who have sufficient use of reason, when seriously ill
- Those whose mental/emotional illness put them at risk of death
- The elderly who are considerably weakened, even without illness
- Those unconscious or who have lost use of reason, if there were a probability they would ask for the Sacrament
- Those previously anointed whose condition has worsened
- Non-Catholic Christians who are at the point of death, cannot access their own ministers, manifest a Catholic faith in it, and are properly disposed to receive the Anointing (*N.B. All 4 conditions must be met.*)

## Who Should NOT Receive This Sacrament?

*The Church has many prayers in her treasury for those not eligible to receive the Anointing, with the best recourse being Confession and Holy Communion.*

- If an elderly person has not weakened considerably due to age
- Though all surgery may be risky, surgeries for non-serious, elective, and cosmetic reasons should instead receive *Confession & Eucharist*
- Seriously ill children who have not attained the use of reason (usually age 7), should have recourse to the Sacrament of *Confirmation*
- Disability does not necessarily indicate serious illness
- Soldiers/First Responders whose circumstances, but not illness, puts them in danger of death. They should receive *Confession & Eucharist*
- Those whose mental/emotional illness would not lead to death
- Those in invalid marriages unless they are at the point of death and pledge to get validly married in the Church if health is restored.
- The Unbaptized should instead be *baptized* (if they desire it).
- Non-Catholic Christians, if they have access to their own ministers, and/or do not manifest a Catholic faith
- Those persevering obstinately in manifest grave sin or who have not yet gone to the *Sacrament of Confession* for grave sins committed.