



## *Healing Faith*

ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF PHOENIX  
THE SACRAMENT OF THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK  
GUIDELINES 2008

# Guidelines for Administration and Reception of the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick

*"By the sacred anointing of the sick and the 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."*

(CCC #1499 quoting LG 11)

## UNDERSTANDING THE ADMINISTRATION AND RECEPTION OF THE SACRAMENT OF ANOINTING FOR THE SICK

*"The sacred anointing of the sick by which the Church commends the faithful who are dangerously ill to the suffering and glorified Lord in order that He relieve and save them; is conferred by anointing them with oil and pronouncing the words prescribed in the liturgical books" (Canon 998).*

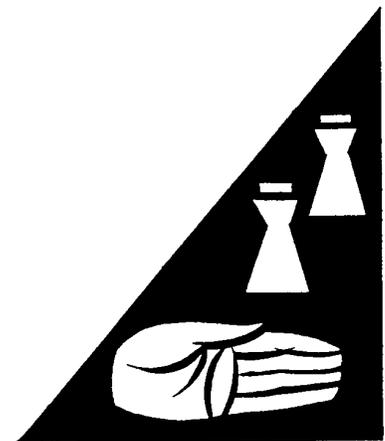
Of the many things that trouble the human spirit, suffering and illness can be one of the greatest challenges. Being Christian does not exempt one from suffering, but being Christian does help one to have a better understanding of suffering and to endure pain with greater fortitude. As Catholic Christians we know that through Christ, suffering has a meaning and value for our personal salvation as well as the salvation of the world. "It is not by sidestepping or fleeing from suffering that we are healed, but rather by our capacity for accepting it, maturing through it and finding meaning through union with Christ, who suffered with infinite love" (*Spe Salvi* # 37). As members of the Body of Christ, we share in the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ and find hope in our unity with Him.

God bestows the blessings of good health on us. It is His plan that we have good health in order to fulfill our role in the world, and the Church. It is also true that people suffer pain and illness. This can be made worse by feelings of isolation, rejection or misunderstanding that often accompany human suffering. This experience can either alienate us from Christ or bring us into union with Him. In walking with Christ through illness and suffering, this union will bring us to know the great Christian hope of redemption.

Members of the Church in their various roles can function as the bridge between those who suffer and the parish community. Pastoral involvement by the Church, who is strengthened by Christ can help diminish the fear, isolation and loneliness those who are suffering may experience. Through those providing pastoral care to the sick and dying, the Church brings comfort, personal presence and the prayers of the faith community. The sick and dying also provide an example to the faith community: "By their witness the sick show that our mortal life must be redeemed through the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection" (*The Rites of the Catholic Church, Volume One*).

*"We are called to stand beside the bed of those who are about to die, urging them to greater faith, commending them to God's mercy, and tearfully placing them in God's hands".*

(Forward from Pastoral Care of the Dying; Bishops' Committee on Liturgy United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.)



# The Minister of the Anointing of the Sick

*"Is anyone among you suffering...Is anyone among you sick? He should summon the presbyters of the church, and they should pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord." James 5: 13-14*



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## **Canon 1003, § 1**

Every priest and a priest alone validly administer the anointing of the sick.

## **Canon 1003, § 2**

All priests to whom the care of souls has been entrusted have the duty and right of administering the anointing of the sick for the faithful entrusted to their pastoral office. For a reasonable cause, any other priest can administer this sacrament with at least the presumed consent of the priest mentioned above.

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## **Pastoral Implications:**

1. This office is ordinarily exercised by bishops and parish priests, ordained (priest) chaplains of health care facilities, and ordained superiors of clerical religious orders. (*The Rites, "Pastoral Care of the Sick" #16*).
2. Those who exercise the sacramental ministry of anointing the sick are responsible, with the assistance of religious and members of the laity, to both prepare the person being anointed for the graces of the sacrament and to help the sick person and others who are present understand its proper meaning.

# Recipients of the Anointing of the Sick

*"...The Lord sustains them on their sickbed, allays the malady when they are ill."*

*Psalms 41: 4*

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## **Canon 1004, § 1**

The anointing of the sick can be administered to a member of the faithful who, having reached the use of reason begins to be in danger due to sickness or old age.

## **Canon 1004, § 2**

This sacrament can be repeated if the sick person, having recovered, again becomes gravely ill or if the condition becomes more grave during the same illness.

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## **Purpose of the Sacrament of Anointing:**

1. The purpose of this sacrament is to:
  - Bring spiritual and even physical strength during an illness, especially near the time of death;
  - Bring God's grace to the recipient through the power of the Holy Spirit.
2. In the past "Extreme Unction", as the sacrament was known, was reserved for those at the point of death. Today, the grace and strength of the sacrament can be given to any member of the faithful who faces serious illness or surgery.
3. Just as Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist initiate us into the life of the Church, Penance, Anointing of the Sick and Eucharist prepare us for the final journey from our earthly lives into unity with the Father.

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**The Church believes and confesses that among the seven sacraments there is one especially intended to strengthen those who are being tried by illness...**

(CCC # 1511)

- A prudent or reasonably sure judgment is sufficient for deciding on the seriousness of an illness; if necessary a doctor may be consulted.
- A sick person may be anointed before surgery whenever a serious illness is the reason for the surgery.
- Elderly people may be anointed if they have become notably weakened even though no serious illness is present.
- 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.

*The Rites, Vol. 1; Pastoral Care of the Sick '#8, 9-12'*

# Effects of the Sacraments for the Sick and Dying

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## The Effects of the Celebration of this Sacrament

1. A particular gift of the Holy Spirit
2. Union with the passion of Christ.
3. An ecclesial grace.
4. A preparation for the journey

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1. *A particular gift of the Holy Spirit.* In this sacrament the one who receives is blessed with a gift of the Holy Spirit who comes to strengthen and give the peace and courage to overcome the difficulties present with serious illness or the frailty of old age (CCC# 1520).
  2. *Union with the Passion of Christ.* In the reception of this sacrament the sick person receives the grace and the strength of uniting more closely to Christ's Passion. "Suffering, a consequence of original sin, acquires a new meaning; it becomes a participation in the saving work of Jesus" (CCC#1521).
  3. *An Ecclesial Grace.* Through the sacrament the sick who receive it are united to the passion and death of Jesus Christ. In so doing, they contribute to the good of the people of God. At the same time the Church herself intercedes and prays for the one who is sick (CCC# 1522).
  4. *A preparation for the final journey.* "The Anointing of the Sick completes our conformity to the death and Resurrection of Christ, just as Baptism began it. It completes the holy anointings that mark the whole Christian life: that of Baptism which sealed the new life in us, and that of Confirmation which strengthened us for the combat of this life. This last anointing fortifies the end of our earthly life like a solid rampart for the final struggles before entering the Father's house" (CCC# 1523).

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### ***Special Grace of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick has as its effects:***

*-the uniting of the sick person to the passion of Christ, for his own good and that of the whole Church;*

*-the strengthening, peace, and courage to endure in a Christian manner the suffering of illness or old age;*

*-the forgiveness of sins, if the sick person was not able to obtain it through the sacrament of Penance;*

*-the restoration of health, if it is conducive to the salvation of his soul;*

*-the preparation for passing over to eternal life*

CCC #1532

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# Viaticum, the Last Sacrament of the Christian Life

*"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*

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## The Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion:

- May and should give Viaticum to the dying.
- Can contact a priest if the person dying has not received Penance or the Anointing of the Sick.

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## Apostolic Pardon

**When Viaticum is distributed within Mass, the prayer of Apostolic Pardon may be offered by the priest before the dismissal.**

*(Pastoral Care of the Sick #195)*

**When Viaticum is distributed outside of Mass, the prayer of Apostolic Pardon may be offered by the priest "at the conclusion of the sacrament of penance or the penitential rite."**

*(Pastoral Care of the Sick #201)*



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## Canon 921, § 1

The Christian faithful who are in danger of death from any cause are to be nourished by holy communion in the form of Viaticum

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## Practical Implications:

- Viaticum can best be described as Holy Communion for the Dying. Those facing imminent death should receive Holy Communion in the form of Viaticum. Anointing of the Sick strengthens us in the face of illness or sickness. Eucharist as Viaticum is the sacrament along with Penance which prepares an individual for the final journey through death into everlasting life with Christ. Eucharist as Viaticum is "food for the journey."
- All baptized Christians who are able to receive communion are bound to receive viaticum by reason of the precept to receive communion when in danger of death from any cause. (*The Rites: "Pastoral Care of the Sick." Viaticum for the Dying # 27*).
- Priests with pastoral responsibility must see that the celebration of this sacrament is not delayed, but that the faithful are nourished by it while still in full possession of their faculties.
- The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick may be given after Penance but before Viaticum.
- The Church teaches that Viaticum is the essential sacrament when one is facing death. A person who is unable to swallow is unable to receive Viaticum.
- Anyone who is conscious ought to receive the sacrament of Penance as part of the 'continuous Rite' if they are in need of it (*cf. The Rites, "Pastoral Care of the Sick" #30*). An unconscious person can be anointed and receive absolution through that sacrament.
- The prayers that accompany the Rite of Viaticum comfort and strengthen the person who is dying. It is best to administer Holy Communion while the person is still conscious and able to swallow. Once death has become imminent the person may receive Viaticum every day for as long as they are able. (*Viaticum should be brought to the person before the condition deteriorates to the point in which the sick person is unable to receive Holy Communion.*)