

SACRAMENTS AND SYMBOLS

The ANOINTING OF THE SICK

In our Catholic tradition there are two sacraments of healing: *Reconciliation* and the *Anointing of the Sick*. Both sacraments are concerned with restoring a person to health- reconciliation with spiritual health and the anointing with physical health.

The prayers for the Anointing of the Sick ask God to strengthen the person in their struggle with illness and hope for their restoration to health. It is a prayer that hopes for recovery! We remember this sacrament being called “Extreme Unction,” as it was thought of as a deathbed experience! “Extreme unction” means “last anointing.” We referred to it as the “last rites.” It was unfortunate that people thought of it only as a ritual for those near death, and that as a result family members delayed calling the church until the person was near death or too ill to be aware of the sacrament.



Our source for this sacramental ministry to the sick is *James 5:14-15*: *Is anyone among you sick? Let them summon the presbyters of the church and they should pray over and anoint the sick with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick and the Lord will raise them up. Have they committed any sins? They will be forgiven.*

Today we try to distinguish between the Anointing of the Sick- prayers for strength in the struggle with illness, and the sacrament for those near death: Viaticum, which means “food for the journey.” Viaticum is Holy Communion accompanied by prayers commending the person into God’s merciful embrace.

Each month on the first Saturday we offer the Anointing of the Sick at the 9am Mass- it is a moment to pray for and encourage those who face the difficulties and burdens of illness.

There are several circumstances in which a person can receive the Sacrament of the Sick:

Who can be anointed?

- persons who are seriously ill
- persons who are terminally ill
- persons undergoing medical treatment such as chemotherapy, dialysis, etc.
- persons with chronic conditions such as heart disease or diabetes.
- persons anticipating or recovering from surgery • persons over 65- who could be anointed annually.

Someone not well enough to come to church for the anointing could be visited at home by a priest—this can be arranged by calling the parish office.

We should also notice the listing of those requesting our prayers each week in the church bulletin. In times of illness and crisis we depend on the prayers of the church to support and strengthen us in our struggle.