

What is the Anointing of the Sick, often called *the sacrament of the sick*?

The Church believes that among the seven sacraments there is one especially intended to strengthen those who are ill. This sacred anointing of the sick was instituted by Christ as a true and proper sacrament of the New Testament. To it St. Mark refers in his Gospel, and also St. James the Apostle (5: 14-15) recommends receiving it.

The sacrament of Anointing of the Sick is given to those who are seriously ill by anointing them on the forehead and hands with blessed oil and saying: "*Through this holy anointing may the Lord in his love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit. May the Lord who frees you from sin save you and raise you up.*"

What does this sacrament give?

The special grace of the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick:

- unites the sick person to the suffering of Christ;
- gives strength, peace, and courage to endure in a Christian manner the sufferings of illness or old age;
- forgives sins, if the sick person was not able to receive the sacrament of Reconciliation;
- restores health, if it is conducive to the salvation of his soul;
- prepares the person for passing over to eternal life.

Who should receive this sacrament?

As its name states, the Anointing of the Sick is not a sacrament for those only who are at the point of death. Therefore, as soon as anyone develops a serious illness or begins to be in danger of death from sickness or old age, he/she should receive this sacrament. A serious surgery or a more pronounced frailty of an elderly person are only two examples of the situations mentioned above. Please remember that receiving the Anointing of the Sick DOES NOT necessarily mean that (1) you are dying or (2) there is something about your health that the doctors or family don't want you to know.

If a sick person who received this sacrament recovers, he/she can in the case of another grave illness receive this sacrament again. If during the same illness the person's condition becomes more serious, the sacrament also may be repeated.

Who can anoint?

Only bishops and priests may administer the Anointing of the Sick.

What is the Viaticum?

In addition to the Anointing of the Sick, the Church offers those who are about to leave this life the Eucharist as Viaticum. Holy Communion received at this moment of "passing over" to the Father, has a particular significance and importance as it becomes the sacrament of passing over from death to life, from this world to the Father. It is the seed of eternal life and the power of resurrection, according to the words of the Lord: "*He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.*"

Frequently Asked Questions:

1. I received this sacrament and I have noticed no change in my physical health. Why?

This sacrament is God's grace and not a medical treatment or a magic ritual, or an automatic miracle maker. Its effects are fixed on the person's salvation accompanied sometimes by his/her physical recovery.

2. I am admitted to the hospital. What should I do?

Every hospital in Rhode Island has a priest on duty. In case of emergency, please RIGHT AWAY ask the nurse or doctor to send for a priest to come as soon as possible.

Please also notify your parish about your illness and admittance to the hospital.

3. Someone from my family is at home hospice. What then?

Please call your parish priest as soon as possible (351-9306 at St. Adalbert's). Do not delay asking for this sacrament!