



Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick



“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, and the prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up. If he has committed any sins, he will be forgiven.” James 5:14-15 (NABRE)

The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is one of the Sacraments of Healing, through which Christ continues His ministry of forgiveness, healing, and salvation in the power of the Holy Spirit (CCC 1421).

James 5:14-15 captures its essence: *“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. The prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up. If he has committed any sins, he will be forgiven.”*

What Is the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick?

This Sacrament is Christ’s gift to those suffering from serious illness, the effects of old age, or the approach of death. It imparts spiritual strength, courage, and, when God wills, physical healing. Through this sacrament, Christ unites the sick person with His own suffering and victory over sin, sickness, and death.

The sacrament is not reserved for those at the point of death. Anyone who is seriously ill, undergoing significant medical procedures, or experiencing the effects of advanced age may receive it. Children capable of understanding the sacrament may also be anointed.

Christ’s Institution and Ministry

During His earthly life, Jesus showed profound compassion for the sick, healing them and forgiving their sins. He restored the paralytic, saying: *“Your sins are forgiven”* and then, *“Rise, pick up your mat, and go home”* (Mt. 9:2-6). Jesus’ actions reveal His authority over sin and sickness.

Before ascending to heaven, Jesus entrusted this ministry to the Church, empowering the Apostles: *“They anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them”* (Mark 6:13). This ministry continues today through bishops and priests, who administer the sacrament as Christ’s representatives (CCC 1530).

How the Sacrament Is Administered

The sacrament consists of:

1. **Prayers of the Church:** The priest prays for the sick person, invoking the Holy Spirit’s grace.
2. **Anointing with Oil:** The priest anoints the person’s forehead and hands with holy oil, a sign of healing and strength in Christ.

The sacrament may also be accompanied by the Eucharist, known as Viaticum, for those nearing death. Viaticum, meaning *“food for the journey,”* prepares the soul for the passage to eternal life and serves as a pledge of the resurrection (CCC 1524).

Effects of the Sacrament

The Anointing of the Sick brings several graces:

1. **Strength, Peace, and Courage:** It helps the sick person face illness or death with trust in God and freedom from fear (CCC 1520).
2. **Forgiveness of Sins:** When necessary, the sacrament reconciles the person with God, restoring grace lost through sin.
3. **Spiritual and Physical Healing:** If it is God’s will, the sacrament can bring physical healing. At the very least, it offers spiritual healing and consolation.
4. **Union with Christ’s Suffering:** It transforms suffering into a participation in Christ’s saving work (CCC 1521).

5. **Preparation for Eternal Life:** The sacrament strengthens the soul for its final journey to God.

Hope in Christ's Victory

The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is a profound expression of Christ's victory over sin, suffering, and death. It reminds us that our suffering, united with Christ's, is not meaningless but redemptive. In receiving this sacrament, we experience the compassionate presence of Christ, who enters into our brokenness to bring healing, hope, and peace.