

Pastoral Reflection
October 30-31, 2021
Anointing of the Sick

As we move towards the end of Ordinary Time we will be celebrating the Feast of Christ the Healer (November 20th and 21st). In order to more fully appreciate the healing power of Christ we will celebrate the Sacrament of the Anointing. Below are a few excerpts from the General Initiation for the Anointing of the Sick.

Those who are seriously ill need the special help of God's grace in this time of anxiety, lest they be broken in spirit and, under the pressure of temptation, perhaps weakened in their faith.

This is why, through the sacrament of anointing, Christ strengthens the faithful who are afflicted by illness, providing them with the strongest means of support.

The celebration of this sacrament consists especially in the laying on of hands by the priests of the Church, the offering of the prayer of faith, and the anointing of the sick with oil made holy by God's blessing. This rite signifies the grace of the sacrament and confers it.

This sacrament gives the grace of the Holy Spirit to those who are sick: by this grace the whole person is helped and saved, sustained by trust in God, and strengthened against the temptations 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. A return to physical health may follow the reception of the sacrament if it will be beneficial to the sick person's salvation. If necessary, the sacrament also provides the sick person with the forgiveness of sins and the completion of Christian penance.

Recipients of the Anointing of the Sick

The Letter of James states that the sick are to be anointed in order to raise them up and save them. Great care and concern should be taken to see that those of the faithful whose heart is seriously impaired by sickness or old age receive this sacrament.

The sacrament may be repeated if the sick person recovers after being anointed and then again falls ill or if during the same illness the person's condition becomes more serious.

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 may be anointed if they have sufficient use of reason to be strengthened by this sacrament.

The sacrament of anointing is to be conferred on sick people who, although they have lost consciousness or the use of reason, have, as Christian believers, at least implicitly asked for it when they were in control of their faculties.

When a priest has been called to attend those who are already dead, he should not administer the sacrament of anointing. Instead, he should pray for them, asking that God forgive their sins and graciously receive them into the kingdom. But if the priest is doubtful whether the sick person is dead, he should confer the sacrament.

Fr. Jack Schuler

