

Understanding the Catechism on The Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick

The Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick offers spiritual healing and strength to those who are seriously ill or in danger due to sickness or old age.

Understanding this sacrament involves recognizing its biblical foundations, its significance within the Catholic Church, and its intended effects on the faithful.

How Was Sickness Viewed in the Old Testament?

In the Old Testament, sickness was seen as a sign of human weakness and was often perceived as mysteriously linked to sin. The prophets understood that sickness could also hold redemptive value, serving as a means to atone for one's own sins and those of others. People lived their illness in the presence of God, from whom they sought healing.

The Compassion of Jesus for the Sick:

Jesus' compassion for the sick and His numerous healings were clear signs that the Kingdom of God had arrived, bringing victory over sin, suffering, and death. Through His passion and death, Jesus gave new meaning to human suffering, which, when united with His own, can become a means of purification and salvation for us and for others.

The Church's Attitude Toward the Sick:

Following the charge received from the Lord to heal the sick, the Church diligently cares for the sick, accompanying them with prayers of intercession. The Church possesses a sacrament specifically intended for the benefit of the sick, as attested by Saint James: "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call in the presbyters of the Church and let them pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord" (James 5:14-15).

Who Can Receive the Sacrament?:

Any member of the faithful can receive the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick as soon as they begin to be in danger of death due to sickness or old age. This sacrament can be received multiple times if the person's condition worsens or if another serious illness occurs. Ideally, the sacrament should be preceded by individual confession.

Administration of the Sacrament:

Only priests (bishops or presbyters) can administer the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick. The sacrament involves anointing the forehead and hands (or other parts of the body in different rites) with oil blessed by the bishop, accompanied by prayers asking for the special grace of this sacrament.

Celebration of the Sacrament:

The essential rite of the sacrament involves anointing with oil and prayers for healing and grace. The anointing on the forehead and hands (in the Roman rite) or on other parts of the body (in other rites) is performed by the priest, who prays for the sick person's recovery and spiritual strength.

Effects of the Sacrament:

The Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick provides several key benefits:

- **Special Grace:** Unites the sick person more closely to the Passion of Christ for their good and the good of the Church.
- **Comfort and Peace:** Offers comfort, peace, and courage to endure suffering.
- **Forgiveness of Sins:** Provides forgiveness of sins if the sick person cannot make a confession.
- **Restoration of Health:** Sometimes brings physical healing if it is God's will.
- **Preparation for Eternal Life:** Prepares the sick person for the journey to the Father's House.

Viaticum:

Viaticum is the Holy Eucharist given to those nearing the end of their earthly life, preparing them for their journey to eternal life. Receiving the Body and Blood of Christ at this moment serves as a seed of eternal life and the power of resurrection.