

# The Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **What Catholics believe about the Sacrament of the Sick:**

*Catholics believe that a time of sickness can be a time to recall God's presence and to celebrate God's healing in their lives. The rites of the Church serve to remind us of God's presence and our dependence upon God. The Anointing of the Sick helps us to remember our need for spiritual and physical healing.*

### **Why isn't it called the "Last Rites" anymore?**

*The renewed rites of the Church call this sacrament the Anointing of the Sick. It is no longer called "Extreme Unction" or "the last anointing." This reflects the Church's belief that this sacrament is for any person who is seriously sick or elderly. This sacrament can be celebrated several times in a person's lifetime, whenever a sickness or advanced age causes a person to be concerned for their spiritual welfare.*

### **Who should celebrate the Sacrament of the Sick?**

*Any Catholic who is seriously ill, advanced in age, or who feels the need for the comforting*

*presence of the Church's sacramental prayer life may be anointed. This sacrament may be repeated if an illness progresses, or if new illnesses develop. Some nursing homes and other long-term care facilities provide semi-annual prayer services with the Sacrament of the Sick for their people.*

### **What does the Rite for the Sacrament of the Sick look like?**

*Quite simply, the Sacrament of the Sick consists of prayers, a laying on of hands by a priest, and an anointing with the holy oil of the sick. The rite may include private confession, and Holy Communion may be given to the sick person if he/she is able to receive.*

### **Can family members be present for the anointing?**

*Yes, definitely. All sacraments of the Church are, by nature, communal acts. The Church encourages family members and other members of the Church to be present for the celebration.*

### **Do we ever anoint someone who is already dead?**

*The simple answer is no. We do not anoint dead bodies. Sacraments are for the living. We do, however, want to help console any family members who are present at the death of a loved one. Priests or deacons or lay ministers may be called to assist with the consolation of family members. The Church has some fine prayers and her tradition of pastoral care to offer for the living family members at this time.*

### **Is there any charge for this sacrament?**

*No, there is never a charge for the sacrament.*

### **How do I arrange to celebrate the Sacrament of the Sick?**

*To arrange for a priest to celebrate the Anointing of the Sick, simply call the parish office. Do not ask for the "Last Rites," but ask for the Anointing of the Sick, remembering that this sacrament is for the living. If possible, arrange to celebrate the Anointing at a time when family members can be present.*

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