

When a person is nearing death and unable to receive Holy Communion, the **PRAYERS FOR THE DYING**, may be offered by a priest, deacon, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion or other person using the prayers found in the **PASTORAL CARE OF THE SICK** book.

This is not a Sacrament but are prayers which are offered for the salvation of the dying person. If a priest offers these prayers, the **APOSTOLIC PARDON** may be prayed offering forgiveness of all sins.

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Once a person has died, **PRAYERS FOR THE DECEASED**, may be offered by a priest, deacon, Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion or other person using the prayers found in the **PASTORAL CARE OF THE SICK** book. This is not a Sacrament but are prayers which are offered for the salvation of the dying person.

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The Church provides that these Sacraments and Rites may be celebrated with and for any Catholic who disposed to receive them. They may also be celebrated with baptized non-Catholics "who cannot approach a minister of their own community and who spontaneously ask for them, provided that they demonstrate the Catholic faith in respect of these sacraments and are properly disposed" (Canon 844). If a

sick person is not baptized, the person [or a family member] may request baptism, which acts as "the gateway to the sacraments" (849).

Again, all these Sacraments and rituals are repeatable as needed. A sick person may request confession whenever s/he reasonably believes s/he needs it. S/He may request that Holy Communion be brought either daily or weekly. If the person is homebound, s/he ordinarily ought to respect the resources of the parish in providing Holy Communion to those who cannot attend Mass. Anointing of the Sick may be offered again if an illness worsens or if the patient relapses after regaining health. Viaticum may be offered daily until the person is unable to receive and consume the host, or even a particle of the host. And the Prayers for the Dying may be offered as needed when the person is in the state of dying.

The health status of the person determines which Sacrament and/or ritual is offered based on the judgment of the priest, deacon, or Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion along with input from family, medical personnel, and other care providers.

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For more information, please contact the local parish office.

[Fr. Mark Stoll, 11/29/2019]

LAST RITES or PASTORAL CARE OF THE SICK?

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The Sacrament of **ANOINTING OF THE SICK** is sometimes confused with the "last rites" which includes several sacramental celebrations including the Sacrament of **RECONCILIATION** [Confession or Penance], **ANOINTING OF THE SICK**, and **EUCCHARIST** [Holy Communion, **VIATICUM**]. Most of these rites and other rites may be found in the ritual book **PASTORAL CARE OF THE SICK**. These are "final" rituals the Church offers to souls preparing for their journey from this life to the next.

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If possible, a seriously ill person ought to make a sacramental confession to a priest via the Sacrament of **RECONCILIATION**. This Sacrament is offered regularly at the parish church [check the parish bulletin or website for times] and upon request made to a Catholic priest. Reception of the other sacra-

ments does not *necessarily* depend on sacramental confession. However, a valid confession ensures the soul is properly disposed to the Sacrament of **ANOINTING OF THE SICK** and Holy Communion. The Sacrament of **ANOINTING OF THE SICK** offers the opportunity for **RECONCILIATION** at the beginning of the Rite. Only a Catholic priest may preside at the Sacrament of **RECONCILIATION**. This Sacrament may be repeated as necessary and is required annually and recommended to be celebrated monthly by all Catholics to remain in good standing with the Church.

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The Sacrament of **ANOINTING OF THE SICK** is administered by a Catholic priest to persons who are ill or facing surgery who are not in immediate danger of death. This ritual may be celebrated for just one sick person or for a group of sick persons within or outside the celebration of Mass (CCC 1517). This Sacrament is meant for the “strengthening, peace, and courage to overcome the difficulties that go with the condition of serious illness or the frailty of old age. This grace is a gift of the Holy Spirit, who renews trust and faith in God and strengthens against the temptations of the

evil one, [especially] the temptation to discouragement and anguish in the face of death” (CCC 1520). This ritual includes a penitential rite (unless it was preceded by sacramental confession), reading from Scripture, a brief homily, a litany, the laying-on of hands, and the anointing with Oil of the Sick. Holy Communion may also be given to the sick person by the priest during this celebration. It is important to note that “the anointing of the sick is not to be conferred upon those who obstinately persist in a manifestly grave sin” (Code of Canon Law, 1007).

It is this ritual that was for centuries known as **THE LAST RITE** or **EXTREME UNCTION** (“**FINAL ANOINTING**”) as it was ordinarily was given to those in immediate danger of death. However, after the Second Vatican Council [1962-1965], the Church encouraged reception of the Sacrament “as soon as any one of the faithful begins to be in danger of death from sickness or old age,” and when it is “the appropriate time for him to receive this sacrament has certainly already arrived” (*Sacramentum Infirmorum*).

This Sacrament may be repeated when a person’s health condition deteriorates and before a person is in the state of dying.

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The Sacrament of the **EUCCHARIST** is most often celebrated regularly, each day, at the parish celebration of the Mass or the Eucharist, during which Holy Communion is offered to Catholics in good standing with the Church. This sacrament may be

offered to persons in their home, in the hospital, or in a nursing home by priests, deacons, and officially commissioned lay faithful known as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion upon request or regularly scheduled times. This Sacrament may be offered once a day.

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When a person is nearing death, this Sacrament is known as **VIATICUM** [Latin for “food (provision) for a journey”]. Ideally, this is the final Sacrament a Catholic ought to celebrate as the person receives Holy Communion as the person receives the Body and Blood of Christ before the moment of “passing over” to the Father to fulfill the word of Jesus Christ who said, “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day” [John 6:54]. Holy Communion as Viaticum is offered by a priest, deacon, or Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion when the person is still able to receive and consume the host, if only a small particle of a host. If a priest offers these prayers, the **APOSTOLIC PARDON** may be prayed offering forgiveness of all sins. As with the Sacrament of Eucharist, this Sacrament may be offered once a day.

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