

Anointing of the sick

(The Archdiocese of Santa Fe does not have additional policies concerning the anointing of the sick. The questions below deal with the administration of the Sacrament according to Canon Law and the Rite of Anointing.)

1. Must a person be dying in order to receive the sacrament of the anointing of the sick?

The anointing of the sick may be administered to the faithful who have the use of reason and whose health is seriously impaired by sickness or old age. (can. 1004 &, Rite of Anointing 4) Some examples would be: when serious illness is the reason for surgery; the elderly who have become noticeably weakened; sick children who have the use of reason. Church law indicates that if there is doubt whether the person has the use of reason, is seriously ill or is dead, then the sacrament may be administered. (canon 1005; Rite of Anointing 8, 10-12)

2. May a person who is dead be anointed?

If the person is already dead, the priest does not administer the sacrament of the anointing of the sick. Instead he prays the prayers of the dead for that person. These prayers ask God's forgiveness of his/her sins and that God receive him/her into the kingdom of heaven. (Rite of Anointing, 15)

3. May a deacon or lay person anoint with the Oil of the Sick?

The Oil of the Sick is used only in the anointing associated with the sacrament of the anointing of the sick and only a priest may validly administer this sacrament. For this reason deacons, communion ministers to the sick or others who come to pray with the sick are advised not to use any type of oil to anoint one who is ill so as not to give the impression of celebrating the sacrament of the anointing of the sick.