

PASTORAL CARE OF THE SICK

Excerpts from the official ritual book

rites of anointing and viaticum

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

HUMAN SICKNESS AND ITS MEANING IN THE MYSTERY OF SALVATION

1 ... Christians feel and experience pain as do all other people.... From Christ's words they know that sickness has meaning and value for their own salvation and for the salvation of the world. They also know that **Christ**, who during his life often **visited and healed the sick**, **loves them** in their illness.

2 [S]ickness **cannot** as a general rule be regarded as a **punishment** inflicted on each individual for personal sins (see John 9:3). ... **Christ is still pained and tormented in his members**, made like him. ...

3 [W]e should **fight strenuously against all sickness** and carefully seek the blessings of good health, so that we may fulfill our role in human society and in the Church. Yet we should always be prepared to fill up what is lacking in Christ's sufferings for the salvation of the world.... Moreover, the role of the sick in the Church is to be a **reminder** to others of the essential or higher things. By their witness the sick show that our mortal life must be redeemed through the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection.

4 The sick person is not the only one who should fight against illness. Doctors and all who are devoted in any way to caring for the sick should consider it their duty to **use all the means** which in their judgment may help the sick, both **physically** and **spiritually**. In so doing, they are fulfilling the command of Christ to visit the sick, for Christ implied that those who visit the sick should be concerned for the **whole person** and offer both physical relief and spiritual comfort.

CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENTS FOR THE SICK AND THE DYING

ANOINTING OF THE SICK

5 ... 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.

...

6 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.... **A return to physical health may follow** the reception of this 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

8 ... Great care and concern should be taken to see that those of the faithful **whose health is seriously impaired by sickness or old age** receive this sacrament. A prudent or reasonably sure judgment, without scruple, is sufficient

9 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.

10 A sick person may be anointed **before surgery** whenever a serious illness is the reason for the surgery.

11 **Elderly** people may be anointed if they have become notably weakened even though no serious illness is present.

12 Sick **children** may be anointed if they have sufficient **use of reason**

13 In public and private catechesis, the faithful should be **educated to ask** for the sacrament of anointing.... They should not follow the **wrongful practice of delaying** the reception of the sacrament. All who care for the sick should be taught the meaning and purpose of the sacrament.

14 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.

15 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.

53 ... Those who are judged to have a serious **mental** illness and who would be strengthened by the sacrament may be anointed.

MINISTER OF THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK

16 The **priest** is the only proper minister of the anointing of the sick. ...

REQUIREMENTS FOR CELEBRATING THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK

20 The matter proper for the sacrament is **olive oil** or... other oil derived from plants.

21 The oil used for anointing the sick must be **blessed** for this purpose by the bishop or a priest ...

23 The sick person is anointed on the **forehead** and on the **hands**. It is appropriate to divide the sacramental form so that the first part is said while the forehead is anointed, the latter part while the hands are anointed.

CONTINUOUS RITE

30 For **special** cases, when **sudden** illness or some other cause has unexpectedly placed one of the faithful in proximate danger of death, a continuous rite is provided by which the sick person may be given the sacraments of **penance, anointing,** and the eucharist as **viaticum** in a single celebration....

OFFICES AND MINISTRIES FOR THE SICK

32 **If one member suffers in the Body of Christ, which is the Church, all the members suffer with that member** (1 Corinthians 12:26).... Every **scientific** effort to prolong life and every act of care for the sick, on the part of any person, may be considered a preparation for the Gospel and a **sharing in Christ's healing ministry.**

33 **[A]ll baptized** Christians share in this ministry of mutual charity within the Body of Christ by **doing all that they can to help the sick return to health,** by showing love for the sick, and by celebrating the sacraments with them. Like the other sacraments, these too have a **community aspect,** which should be brought out as much as possible when they are celebrated.

34 The **family and friends** of the sick and those who take care of them in any way have a special share in this ministry of comfort. ...

42 The rites in Part I of *Pastoral Care of the Sick: Rites of Anointing and Viaticum* are used by the Church to **comfort the sick in time of anxiety, to encourage them to fight** against illness, and perhaps to **restore**

them to health. These rites are **distinct** from those in the second part of this book, which are provided to comfort and strengthen a Christian in the **passage from this life.**

43 The **concern that Christ showed** for the **bodily and spiritual** welfare of those who are ill is **continued by the Church** in its ministry to the sick. This ministry is the **common responsibility of all Christians,** who should **visit** the sick, **remember** them in prayer, and celebrate the **sacraments** with them.

Remembrance of the sick is especially appropriate at **common worship on the Lord's Day,** during the **general intercessions at Mass Family members and those who are dedicated to the care of the sick** should be remembered on these occasions as well.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANOINTING OF THE SICK

97 The sacrament of anointing is the proper sacrament for those Christians whose health is seriously impaired by sickness or old age. It may be celebrated in the home, in a hospital or institution, or in church. ...

98 ... [T]hrough the sacrament of anointing the church supports the sick in their struggle against illness and **continues Christ's messianic work of healing.** All who are **united in the bond of a common baptism** and a common faith are joined together in the body of Christ since **what happens to one member affects all.** The sacrament of anointing effectively expresses the share that each one has in the sufferings of others.

99 The priest should ensure that the **abuse of delaying the reception of the sacrament does not occur,** and that the celebration takes place while the **sick person is capable of active participation.** ...

Because of its very nature as a **sign,** the sacrament of the anointing of the sick should be celebrated with **members of the family and other representatives of the Christian community whenever this is possible.** Then the sacrament is seen for what it is -- a part of the **prayer of the Church** and an **encounter with the Lord.** The sign of the sacrament will be further enhanced by **avoiding undue haste** in prayer and action.

101 If the sick person wishes to celebrate the sacrament of penance, it is preferable that the priest make himself available for this during a previous visit....