

Roman Catholic  
Anointing of the Sick  
(And Last Rites)  
Guidelines  
And  
Customs

St. Cecilia Catholic Church  
2159 Highway 195  
Jasper, AL 35503

# ANOINTING

*Suffering and illness have always been among the greatest problems that trouble the human spirit. Christians feel and experience pain as do all other people; yet their faith helps them to grasp more deeply the mystery of suffering and to bear their pain with greater courage....*

*Through the sacrament of anointing, Christ strengthens the faithful who are afflicted by illness, providing them with the strongest means of support.*

Pastoral Care of the Sick: Rites of Anointing and Viaticum: General Introduction, nn. 1, 5

*This booklet has been prepared by parishioners of St. Cecilia Catholic Church to help our parish community review the Church's vision, understanding, teaching, and discipline of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick and the local Customs for celebrating the Sacrament at St. Cecilia Catholic Church.*

reflection, they judge that they are eligible for the sacrament, they are asked to submit a request card as they approach to be anointed.

## DOCUMENTATION

The administration of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is to be recorded in the permanent parish records.

To help determine qualification and to document administration of the sacrament, the following information may be provided for the conferring of the sacrament in a communal setting:

### **ANOINTING OF THE SICK UNCIÓN DE LOS ENFERMOS**

*To properly record the reception of the sacrament, please provide the following information:*

*Para registrar correctamente la recepción del sacramento, proporcione la siguiente información.*

Reason for requesting the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick:

Motivo para solicitar el Sacramento de la Unción de los Enfermos:

- Surgery / Cirugía
- Seriously Ill / Seriamente Enfermo
- Notably Weakened by Old Age / Notablemente Debilitado por la Vejez
- Serious Mental Illness / Enfermedad Mental Grave

Name / Nombre:

Address / Correos:

house number & street / número de la casa y calle

city / ciudad state / estado zip code / código postal

Best Phone / Mejor teléfono:

cell / célula other phone / otro teléfono

Email Address / Dirección de Correo Electrónico:

## THE ELDERLY

Elderly people may be anointed if they have notably weakened even though no serious illness is present. Parish ministers who visit the homebound and those in healthcare facilities should contact the parish office to schedule the sacrament when desired.

## EMERGENCIES

In the case of sudden serious health emergencies or unexpected hospitalization, the parish office should be notified as soon as possible to arrange the administration of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.

## COMMUNAL CELEBRATION

The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is communally celebrated several times a year.

To receive the sacrament during these communal celebrations one must have the prerequisite seriously impaired condition as noted above.

The sacrament does not allow for indiscriminate anointing of all who merely desire a "blessing with the holy oils." The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is reserved for the seriously ill. For this reason, those who wish to be anointed during these communal celebrations are asked to reflect on the nature of the sacrament and the state of their health. If, after

## *Prelude*

If you've witnessed the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick lately, you know anointing isn't what it used to be. In days before Vatican II, if the priest arrived for the anointing, or "extreme unction," or "last rites," you knew your hours were numbered.

Today the sacrament is no longer reserved for the dying. In fact, one could theologially make a case that the dying should not be anointed at all, but they should celebrate Viaticum. You can have "last rites" without a priest.

The rite of anointing is part of a book called *Pastoral Care of the Sick: Rites of Anointing and Viaticum*. Extreme unction means, "last anointing," and that term has been discontinued in favor of a broader term—the Pastoral Care of the Sick.

The document says: 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.... 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.

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

Elderly people may be anointed if they have become notably weakened even though no serious illness is present (8–10).

In short, anointing prays for recovery; it helps the “sick person ... to bear suffering bravely ... [and] fight against it” (6).

While a return to physical health may follow anointing, the grace received in the celebration provides spiritual strength, hope, and healing. If you’re gravely sick, the time has come to anoint.

If you’re in the final moments before death, however, we have a separate ritual called Commendation of the Dying. These prayers are used after the minister has already celebrated the Continuous Rite of Penance, Anointing, and Viaticum. It does not include the Anointing of the Sick. However, the rites for the dying should include another sacrament—Holy Communion given as Viaticum, or “food for the journey.”

The sacrament of the dying is “last communion,” and it may be offered by any communion minister. After someone dies, we offer Prayers for the Dead. Again, they do not include an anointing.

Among the requirements to celebrate the sacraments in the Catholic Church is to be a living, breathing, human being. After you’ve died, you don’t need sacraments any more—you’ve got the real thing. At your parish church, you probably only witness the Anointing of the Sick and not the rites for the dying—since pastoral care of the dying is generally offered in hospitals and homes.

## Customs for Anointing of the Sick At St. Cecilia Catholic Church

### INTRODUCTION

What was known generally as “last rites” or “extreme unction” before Vatican Council II, is now called the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick since the sacrament is no longer reserved for the dying.

The rite of anointing is part of the *Pastoral Care of the Sick*. The older term of “extreme unction” has been discontinued in favor of this broader term. Anointing of the Sick prays for recovery. Therefore, 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 the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.

### BEFORE HOSPITALIZATION

One whose health is so seriously impaired that hospitalization is anticipated should contact the parish office to schedule the reception of the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick before being admitted to the hospital. Ideally the sacrament would be celebrated during a scheduled mass with the community present. Otherwise, the sacrament may be administered privately at any time.

## MATTER FOR THE SACRAMENT:

The proper matter for the sacrament is olive oil or, according to circumstances, another plant oil (Rite of Anointing, #20).

## THE LAST RITES:

Although commonly referred to before Vatican Council II, the Sacrament of the Sick is not the “last rites” which properly consist of:

- a. Commendation of the Dying
- b. Viaticum, sometimes called communion of the dying”
- c. Apostolic Blessing - the formula for this blessing is found in Chapter IV, *Rite for Those Near Death*, #122).

You might call the Commendation of the Dying the “last rites,” and a priest need not be present for them because a family member or lay minister may lead these prayers. A priest is required if there is time to celebrate Penance and Anointing, if not already celebrated earlier in the illness. The Church gladly offers its pastoral care as freely as it can.

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# *Anointing of the Sick*

## INTRODUCTION

Canons 998-4007 of the Revised Code of Canon Law govern the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.

## PASTORAL INTRODUCTION (C. 998):

The Catholic Church professes and teaches that the anointing of the sick is one of the seven sacraments of the New Testament, that it was instituted by Christ our Lord, recommended to the faithful, and made known. “Is there any one sick among you? Let him send for the presbyters of the Church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick person and the Lord will raise him up. If he has committed any sins, they will be forgiven him,” (James 5:14-15).

(cf. *Apostolic Constitution Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick*)

## MINISTER OF THE SACRAMENT (C. 1003)

The bishop or priest is the only proper minister of the Anointing of the Sick. This office is ordinarily exercised by bishops, pastors and their assistants, priests who care for the sick or aged in hospitals, and superiors of clerical institutions. Other priests, with the consent of the ordinary minister, may confer the anointing. In case of necessity, a priest may presume consent, but he should inform the pastor or the chaplain of the hospital. (c. 998 and *Introduction to the Rite of Anointing*, #'s 16 & 18)

**N.B.:** Deacons and lay persons are not ministers of the sacrament.

## SUBJECT OF THE SACRAMENT (C. 1004):

a. Persons whose health is seriously impaired by sickness or old age who are dangerously ill may receive this sacrament.

b. The sacrament may be repeated if the sick person recovers after being anointed and then falls ill, or if during the same illness the person's condition becomes more serious (*Rite of Anointing*, #9).

c. A person may be anointed before surgery whenever a serious illness is the reason for the surgery (*Rite of Anointing*, #10).

d. Sick children may be anointed if they have reached the age of reason (considered to be about seven in the United States) (c. 1004).

e. People may be anointed if they have become notably weakened, although no serious illness is present (*Rite of Anointing*, #11).

f. The unconscious should be anointed if it is believed they would have at least implicitly asked for it were they in control of their faculties (*Rite of Anointing*, #14).

g. When a priest has been called to attend a person who is already dead, he should pray for the dead person, asking that God forgive their sins and graciously receive them into his kingdom. The priest is not to administer the sacrament.

h. There is no explicit reference in the canons. Judgment to anoint is made if the person is seriously ill.

**NB:** The sacrament does not allow for indiscriminate anointing of all who are sick, but only of those who are seriously so. For this reason, especially in communal celebrations of anointing, the judgment about who will be anointed in the course of the celebration should be specifically predetermined.

## CATECHESIS:

a. The faithful should be encouraged privately and publicly to ask for the anointing.

b. Parishes are encouraged to conduct communal celebrations of the sacrament.

c. Hospital chaplains should prepare patients and their families for the reception of the sacrament of the sick.