

SACRAMENTS OF HEALING THE SACRAMENT OF THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK

Dear People of St. Andrew the Apostle:

A Sacrament is an external sign (something we can see) instituted by Christ to give grace (to draw us more deeply into the gift of an intimate relationship with Jesus). In the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, Jesus has given us an outward sign of His care, compassion, and mercy for those who are sick, those who suffer from terminal illness, and for those who are about to die.



If you were to search through Scripture, you would find:

- Jesus being **BAPTIZED** in the River Jordan (but never baptizing anyone Himself)
- Jesus **CONFIRMING** the faith of the Apostles when he and the Father poured out the Holy Spirit upon them at Pentecost.
- Jesus celebrating **EUCHARIST** at the Last Supper and after His resurrection at the sea of Galilee, and with the disciples who he met on the road to Emmaus.
- Jesus **ORDAINING** His apostles to the priesthood when He breathed the Holy Spirit upon them and gave them the power to forgive sins, and at the Last Supper when He told His apostles to “do this in memory of me”.
- Jesus celebrating a **MARRIAGE** with the bride and groom at Cana, and blessing them with choice wine to extend their celebration.

But how many times can you hear Jesus saying to another: “Be healed” or “Your sins are forgiven”? Jesus healed and forgave so often that in some ways these actions form the essence of the Gospel. The welcoming of sinners and the healing of those born with defects are probably what resulted in the desire of the Jewish and Roman officials to want to be rid of Him, and to plot against Him, and ultimately to put Him to death.

The Gospel of Mark recounts the story of Jesus sending out His disciples to bring the good news to people. They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them. (MK 6:13) We can see in this Gospel that Jesus has empowered His apostles to heal others through anointing them with oil. The apostle James makes the understanding of this power clear in his epistle: Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. (James 5:14-15) An interesting note here that James adds the “forgiveness of sins” to the Sacrament.

Who Can Administer the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick?

Because it involves forgiveness of sin, only a priest, bishop or the pope may administer the Anointing of the Sick.



Who Should be Anointed?

Anyone who is

- Baptized
- Old enough to have reached the age of reason (normally considered to be 7 years old)
- In grave danger of death, or about to undergo a medical procedure that could result in death, OR
- Has reached “old age” and suffers from the infirmities of aging. “Old Age” is not defined.

Who Should NOT be Anointed?

Anyone who is

- Not Baptized
- Less in age than the standard definition of the “age of reason”. Thus we do not anoint infants or young children since we believe they are under the special care of the Holy Spirit, cannot yet sin, and are close to the heart of Jesus.
- Ill, but not gravely enough to believe that death may result.
- Deceased. If someone dies before the priest can arrive for an anointing, we believe in “ecclesia supplet” which means that the Church supplies the necessary graces in the absence of a priest.

Does one have to wait until they are about to die to be anointed?

NO. Formerly the Anointing of the Sick was referred to as “EXTREME UNCTION”, which literally means final anointing. Thus most people waited until the point of death to request that a priest come and anoint the person. This is not the original understanding of the Anointing of the Sick. Anyone who begins to be in danger of death from sickness, an impending medical procedure, or old age, should not delay in requesting the Sacrament.



Is healing guaranteed by receiving the Sacrament?

There are two types of healing that are part of our experience with the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.

1. Physical healing of our infirmities
2. Spiritual healing and strength to face our suffering.

Personally, I have witnessed both. I have seen a woman near death completely recover after being anointed. I have seen people continue to suffer after being anointed, but there seems to be a peace that they gain in dealing with their infirmities. Whichever healing we receive is up to God. It is His will that we pray for and while we would like our will to be God’s will, accepting and embracing God’s will for us is at the heart of our sacramental life as Catholics.

What should a person do if they are not healed?

1. Pray for acceptance of God’s will.
2. Pray for strength to face the suffering that is involved in their sickness or infirmity.
3. Offer their suffering to God on their own behalf and on the behalf of others, to join it with Christ’s suffering on the Cross. When we do this we transform our suffering into REDEMPTIVE SUFFERING just as Jesus’ suffering on the Cross was redemptive.
4. Allow others to be involved in their physical care, pastoral care, and spiritual care. We have a community called Church to support us in our suffering.

We see the effects of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick as:

1. Uniting the sick person to the passion of Christ, for their own good and that of the whole Church.
2. Giving the sick person the strength, peace, and courage to endure in a Christian manner the sufferings of illness or old age.
3. Imparting the forgiveness of sins, if the sick person was not able to obtain it through the Sacrament of Penance.
4. Providing for the restoration of health, if it conduces to the salvation of their soul.
5. Help the person prepare for their passing over to eternal life.
(Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1532)

How is the Sacrament administered?



The priest says a short prayer, instructs the person to be anointed from the Apostle James, and then lays their hands on them in silence. This “laying on of hands” symbolizes the coming of the Holy Spirit to help the person.

The priest then anoints the forehead and the palms of the hands, saying “Through this Holy Anointing may the Lord help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit. May the Lord who loves you save you and raise you up.” The priest leads the Our Father after the anointing and uses a concluding prayer. It is customary to also offer Holy Communion to the anointed person from the Consecrated Body of Christ that is inside the Tabernacle in Church.



Where can the Anointing take place?

Anywhere. At St. Andrew we offer Anointing of the Sick on Fridays following the 8:30am Mass. It can also be administered by appointment, and the priest can come to the person’s bedside (at home, in the hospital, in a care facility) to anoint someone.