

The sacrament of holy anointing was instituted by Jesus Christ. We read about this in the Bible. Jesus sent the disciples and “They drove out many demons, and they anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them” (Mark 6:13). In the epistle, James says, “Is anyone among you sick? He should summon the presbyters of the church, and they should pray over him and anoint (him) with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up. If he has committed any sins, he will be forgiven” (Jas. 5:14–15). Only priests (presbyters and bishops) can give the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. Oil is blessed by the bishop, or if necessary by the celebrating presbyter himself. When we read the Scripture, we see that people were healed by Jesus Christ both physically and spiritually. Jesus Christ commanded the Twelve to do the same.

Who is eligible to receive the sacrament?

The sacrament can be received by anyone who has a chronic or serious illness, someone who is preparing for major surgery, anyone in danger of death. A person in old age may receive it. Seriously ill children who have reached the use of reason may also be anointed. If during the same illness, the person's condition becomes more serious, the sacrament may be repeated.

What are the effects of the sacrament?

By the sacred anointing of the sick, whoever receives it freely unites him/herself to the Passion and death of Christ as we read in CCC 1499. It gives strength, courage, peace to overcome the difficulties and temptations where the person is sick or in old age. There is a renewal of hope for recovery. The sick person receives the forgiveness of sins, if the sick person was not able to obtain it through the sacrament of penance. The soul is healed. The sick receives spiritual healing. The sick person may also experience a healing of the body.

The sacrament prepares us for eternal life; the preparation for passing over to eternal life.

The Catechism says, "The anointing of the sick is not a sacrament for those only who are at the point of death. Hence, as soon as anyone of the faithful begins to be in danger of death from sickness or old age, the fitting time for him to receive this sacrament has certainly already arrived" (CCC 1514). The Anointing of the Sick is for the benefit of the whole person. “Make this oil a remedy for all who are anointed with it; heal them in body, in soul and in spirit, and deliver them from every affliction.”

The celebration of the sacrament consists essentially of the anointing of the forehead and hands of the sick person, the anointing being accompanied by the liturgical prayer of the celebrant asking for the special grace of this sacrament.

My dear friends, let us keep the sick and the handicapped at the center of our lives. They enrich us. The sick contributes to the sanctification of the Church and to the good of all men for whom the Church suffers and offers herself through Christ to God the Father (CCC1522).

In 1992, Pope John Paul II introduced the celebration of the World Day of the Sick on the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes. Let us pray for the sick and help them.