

## FR. CLIFF'S NOTES

By Fr. Clifford Smith

### The Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick

Formerly called **Extreme Unction** ... meaning the *Last Anointing*. The anointing of the sick is given to bring spiritual and even physical strength during an illness, especially near the time of death. It is most likely one of the last sacraments one will receive.

The **Second Vatican Council** says: "*By the sacred anointing of the sick and the prayer of the priests the whole Church commends those who are ill to the suffering and glorified Lord, that he may raise them up and save them. And indeed she [the Church] exhorts them to contribute to the good of the People of God by freely uniting themselves to the Passion and death of Christ.*" (**Lumen Gentium**, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, 1964.)

The **Catechism of the Catholic Church** says: "*This sacred anointing of the sick was instituted by Christ our Lord as a true and proper sacrament of the New Testament. It is alluded to indeed by Mark, but is recommended to the faithful and promulgated by James the Apostle and brother of the Lord.*" (CCC 1511)

#### Purpose of Anointing of the Sick

Anointing of the Sick is to strengthen those who are being tried by serious or chronic illness, those with serious concern for their health or those suffering the effects of advanced age.

- It seeks healing if it is God's will.
- It brings strength, and peace of mind in suffering
- It is also for the forgiveness of sin.

#### The Outward Sign of Anointing of the Sick:

- ... the laying on of hands by the priest or bishop.
- ... the anointing with blessed oil. (*The oil must come from the olive, or another plant oil. Normally the oil is blessed by the bishop at the yearly Chrism Mass, but it may be blessed by any priest for a given ceremony.*)

#### How is Anointing Instituted by Christ?

- It is found in the many cures enacted by Christ in the Gospels. Laying on of hands, or some other touch was common in healing/miracle stories.
- The apostolic recommendation is most clearly found in the **Letter of James**: "*Is anyone among you sick? He should summon the priests 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.*"

[James 5: 13-15]

#### What is the Grace of Anointing?

- Spiritual wellness, forgiveness of sins, & the possibility of physical healing.
- One's suffering is united to that of Christ;
- One receives the grace conferred by the prayer of the Church;
- It confers spiritual strength and courage;
- It prepares one for the final journey/death.

### **Why does God permit Suffering?**

Sometimes God allows us to undergo sickness as a way of training in righteousness. God often permits suffering and trials for our sanctification. Even though we will face a certain amount of suffering and affliction in our life, we know God's grace is present to give us strength. All of God's graces, including physical health, are bestowed to lead to the salvation of our souls. The Catholic Church teaches that the sacrament brings *"the restoration of health, if it is conducive to the salvation of his soul"* (CCC 1532).

God also uses our suffering to help others. If we suffer, we should look at it as an opportunity for good. We are invited to offer up our suffering for our own sanctification and for our departed brothers and sisters in Christ.

This applies also to the physical suffering of death, which will come for each of us one day. The Bible reminds us, *"As for man, his days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more"* (Ps. 103:15–16).

### **What happened to "Last Rites"?**

Christ has given us the sacraments to comfort us in our final days and prepare us for the journey ahead. These include Penance (or confession), Anointing of the Sick and Viaticum (*which is meant to be the last reception of Communion ... "bread" for the final journey from this life to Eternal Life.*)

The most important part of these last rites is the reception of the Lord in one's final Communion; also called "**Viaticum**" (*Latin for what one takes on the road, i.e., provisions for a journey*) This special Communion prepares us to travel with the Lord on the final part of our journey. Having repented of our sins and received reconciliation, we travel with the Lord Jesus out of this earthly life and to eternal happiness with him in heaven.

From the earliest times, the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick was cherished among Christians, not only in immediate danger of death, but even at the beginning sign of danger from illness or old age. A sermon from the 6<sup>th</sup> Century says the following: *"As often as some infirmity overtakes a man, let him who is ill receive the body and blood of Christ; let him humbly and in faith ask the presbyters for blessed oil, to anoint his body, so that what was written may be fulfilled in him: 'Is anyone among you sick? Let him bring in the presbyters, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he be in sins, they will be forgiven him. . . . See to it, brethren, that whoever is ill hasten to the church, both that he may receive health of body and will merit to obtain the forgiveness of his sins"* (Sermons 13[325]:3).

**St. Mark's celebrates the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick  
On the First and Third Saturday of Every Month  
at the 8:30 am Mass.**