Guidelines for
Pastoral Care of the Sick

ANointing and Viaticum

(Celebrating the Rites)

Diocese of Springfield in Illinois
November 1990
November 1, 1990

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Our Catholic tradition holds that when we, the Church, care for the sick, it is truly Christ himself whom we serve in the suffering members of his Mystical Body. When the Church follows the example of the Lord Jesus, who "went about doing good and healing all" (Acts 10:38), we obey his command to care for the sick (see Mk. 16:18).

Numerous people within our parishes and health care institutions demonstrate this Christ-like love not only by visiting those who are in poor health but also strengthening them through the sacrament of anointing and by nourishing them with the eucharist during their illness and when they are in danger of death. Finally, the Christian community offers prayers for the dying, commending them to God.

On November 27, 1983, the Pastoral Care of the Sick: Rites of Anointing and Viaticum went into effect in the dioceses of the United States. The guidelines that follow offer assistance to priests and those closely involved in the care of the sick and dying. A brief theology and rationale for the celebration of anointing and viaticum is given, as well as the structure of such liturgies both within and outside the context of Mass. Practical suggestions are given for the actual celebration of such events. In addition, frequently asked questions concerning aspects of the sacramental care of the infirm and dying are also presented.

I am grateful to our Commission for the Liturgy and the staff of our Office for Worship for providing these guidelines to assist us in our ministry to the sick and dying. As Jesus responded to the disciples of John the Baptist concerning whether or not he was the Holy One of God: "Go and report... what you have seen and heard. The blind recover their sight, cripples walk, lepers are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life and the poor have the good news preached to them." (Lk. 17:23) May we continue in our ministry this same healing and life-giving outreach to our suffering brothers and sisters.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Daniel L. Ryan
Bishop of Springfield in Illinois
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CATECHESIS FOR ANointING AND VIATICUM

The reality and mystery of suffering, illness and death touch the lives of us all. The 1983 new Rite of Anointing and Viaticum, in the very first paragraph of its introduction, immediately acknowledges this:

"Suffering and illness have always been among the greatest problems that trouble the human spirit. Christians feel and experience pain as do all people; yet their faith helps them to grasp more deeply the mystery of suffering and to bear their pain with greater courage. From Christ's words they know that sickness has meaning and value for their own salvation and 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."

(Pastoral Care of the Sick, par. 1)

JESUS' HEALING MINISTRY

When Jesus appeared proclaiming the Good News of God's Kingdom, it was a kingdom of reconciliation and wholeness. The Kingdom of God was not only proclaimed in word, but also by works. Jesus "spoke to them of the Kingdom of God, and he healed all who were in need of healing" (Luke 9:11). Jesus commissioned the Twelve to continue his ministry in word and work. "They went off, preaching the need of repentance. They expelled many demons, anointed the sick with oil and worked many cures" (Mark 6: 12-13).

This same ministry is continued in the Church, for the Church is the Spirit-filled presence of Christ in the world today. We see from the ending of Mark's Gospel where the risen Christ tells the Eleven to "go into the whole world and proclaim the Good News to all creation" (Mark 16:15). "Signs ...will accompany those who have professed their faith..., and the sick upon whom they lay their hands will recover." (Mark 16: 17-18)

MINISTRY TO THE SICK IN THE EARLY CHURCH

The early Church faithfully continued the command of the Lord to carry on his healing mission. For example, the Letter of James speaks of how one early Christian community carried out this healing ministry:
"If any among you is suffering hardship, let them pray. If a person is in good spirits, such a one should sing a hymn of praise. Is there anyone sick among you? Ask for the presbyters of the Church. They in turn are to pray over the sick persons, anointing them with oil in the Name [of the Lord]. This prayer uttered in faith will reclaim those who are ill, and the Lord will restore them to health. If they have committed any sins, forgiveness will be theirs. Hence, declare your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may find healing.

The fervent petition of a holy person is powerful indeed. Elijah was only a man, yet he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and no rain fell on the land for three years and six months. When he prayed again, the sky burst forth with rain and the land produced its crop".

(James 5: 13-18)

It is within the context of prayer that the author of the Letter of James tells us of his community's practice of praying for the sick. The sick person takes the initiative and calls for the priests. When they arrive, they pray. The phrase "to pray over the sick person" suggests a laying on of hands. They anoint the sick with oil (the community was familiar with the use of oil as a healing ointment). They do this "in the Name", that is, acting with the authority of the Lord. The atmosphere is one of intense mutual prayer. The community prays for the sick and the sick person prays for the community.

VATICAN II AND THE NEW RITE OF ANOINTING

The Second Vatican Council has restored the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick to the same context of prayer and mutual concern that was found in the Letter of James. This was necessary because the Anointing of the Sick has suffered more distortions with the passage of time than perhaps any other sacrament. It had been given the name "Extreme Unction" and had been turned into a sacrament for the dying. The new ritual shows clearly that VIATICUM (EUCHARIST) IS THE SACRAMENT FOR THE DYING AND THAT ANOINTING IS FOR THOSE WHO ARE SICK. "Extreme Unction" was feared by many; it was usually postponed until the last moments of life. Often no one was present but the dying person and the priest. This was a situation that needed to be corrected.

As the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy stressed, "liturgical services involve the whole Body of the Church, they manifest it and have effects on it" (CSL, par. 26). This same document also clearly taught that whenever
the rites of the Church call for "communal celebration" and "active participation of the faithful" (CSL, par. 14), this way of celebrating the sacrament "is to be preferred...to a celebration that is individual and...private". (CSL, par. 27)

In the liturgy, our sanctification is brought about by signs perceptible to the senses, according to the same document (CSL, par. 7). It is especially through the act of signifying that a sacrament is a channel of God's grace. Signs are both given and received. In the Sacrament of the Sick, a sign is given by the Church to the sick person, and the one who is sick gives a sign to the community. The care and concern of the community is a sign to the sick person of the Lord's own great concern for the bodily and spiritual welfare of the sick, hence, the sacrament of the sick needs to be seen within the context of parish and institutional outreach and ministry to the sick and dying. (Pastoral Care of the Sick, par. 34)

We are to be a Church of healing and reconciliation. The celebration of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is a ritual moment which makes visible and present to the sick and the whole community an image of who we are as Church, that is, a community of mutual healing and support.

The sick in return offer a sign to the community: In this sacrament they give witness to their promises at Baptism to die and be buried with Christ crucified. They tell the community that they are prepared to fill up in their flesh what is lacking in Christ's sufferings for the salvation of the world (Colossians 1:24; Romans 8:19-21; Pastoral Care of the Sick, par. 3).

This exchange of signs, this witness and communication between the sick and the healthy members of the community, is at the heart of the sacrament. The sick are assured in the new ritual that their suffering is not "useless" but "has meaning and value for their own salvation and the salvation of the world". (Pastoral Care of the Sick, par. 5) At the same time, the Church asks the Lord to lighten their suffering and save them (James 5: 14-16), and the sick are recognized by the community as productive members, contributing to the welfare of all by associating themselves freely with Christ's passion and death. In the sacrament, the sick give us a sign and embodiment of the words of Paul to Timothy: "You can depend on this: If we have died with him we shall also live with him" (2 Timothy 2: 11-12).
LITURGICAL CELEBRATION OF ANOINTING/VIATICUM

The purpose of this section of the guideline is to call to mind the principles of liturgy defined by Vatican Council II, and to suggest a few practical applications.

BASIC LITURGICAL PRINCIPLES

The bishops of the United States have stressed the importance of planning quality liturgical celebrations:

"Faith grows when it is well expressed in celebration. Good celebrations foster and nourish faith. Poor celebrations may weaken and destroy it."

(Music in Catholic Worship, par. 6)

In the recent past our understanding of the sacraments has often been limited to a minimalist interpretation in terms of matter and form which found expression in privatized celebrations. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (1963) restored a perspective that reflects the broader tradition of sacraments in the Church. This renewed perspective places the sacraments in their proper context as liturgical celebrations. For that reason, the same principles that apply to the Eucharistic celebration also apply to the sacraments for the sick and dying.

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy defines liturgy as the whole public worship performed by the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, that is, by the head and the members making the work of our redemption a present actuality. Through signs perceptible to the senses, human sanctification is signified and brought about in ways proper to each of the signs. Within this renewed understanding of the liturgy, the constitution speaks of the sacraments in this way:

"The purpose of the sacraments is to make people holy, to build up the Body of Christ, and finally, to give worship to God; but being signs they also have a teaching function. They not only presuppose faith, but by words and objects they also nourish, strengthen, and express it; that is why they are called 'sacraments of faith'. They do indeed impart grace, but, in addition, the very act of celebrating them disposes the faithful most effectively to receive this grace in a fruitful manner, to worship God rightly, and to practice charity."

(Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, par. 59)
PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF PRINCIPLES TO STRUCTURES

A. Sacraments, as Liturgy, are part of the "whole public worship" of the Church. The texts and rites have been drawn up so that they express clearly the holy things they signify.

1. Whenever possible, the full rites should be celebrated. The celebration of the Liturgy of the Word is an essential element of the Sacrament and should not be omitted, "for it is from the Scripture that the actions and signs derive their meaning". (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, par. 24)

2. Through the ritual action of the celebration, the meaning of the sacrament as an instrument of God's saving love is made manifest to those participating in it, and a full celebration of the Rite provides a greater opportunity for entering into the mystery of redemption.

3. Pastoral sensitivity to the needs of the sick and dying, however, may necessitate adaptation of the rites.

B. Sacraments, as Liturgy, are "performed by the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ". For this reason, they are hierarchical and communal in nature. This communal nature demands that "whenever rites, according to their specific nature, make provision for communal celebration involving the presence and active participation of the faithful, it is to be preferred, as far as possible, to a celebration that is individual and, so to speak, private." The hierarchical nature requires that "each one, minister or layperson, who has an office to perform, should do all of, but only, those parts which pertain to that office by the nature of the rite and the principles of liturgy". (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, par.28)

Some ways of applying this principle include:

1. Scheduling regular parish celebrations of the Rite of Anointing of the Sick.

2. Encouraging care-givers to participate in the Rite of Anointing of the Sick and the Rite of Viaticum when it is celebrated in the home or in an institution.

3. Creating a team of "Ministers of Care" to carry out sacramental preparation prior to the celebration of the rite; going with the ordained minister into the home or institution as representatives of the parish community and as support to those who will be celebrating the rite.

4. Providing educational opportunities for ministers and parish members through adult education classes, ministry workshops, reading materials, bulletin inserts, etc.

5. Involving participants in liturgical ministries such as lector, cantor, musician, greeter, acolyte, etc.
C. Sacraments, as Liturgy, signify and bring about human sanctification in ways appropriate to the signs. This principle calls for reverent attention to the use of music, objects, gestures and movements, space and its design and decor. The principle of appropriateness addressed in the 1978 BCL document Environment and Art in Catholic Worship is defined as:

"...capable of bearing the weight of mystery, awe, reverence, and wonder which the liturgical action expresses; it must clearly serve (and not interrupt) ritual action which has its own structure, rhythm and movement."

(Environment and Art in Catholic Worship, par. 21)

1. MUSIC

Among the many signs and symbols used by the Church to celebrate its faith, music is of preeminent importance. As sacred song united to words it forms a necessary or integral part of the solemn liturgy.

Music that is chosen according to sound musical, liturgical, and pastoral judgements promotes active participation by the members of the assembly. These three judgements are addressed more fully in the documents Music in Catholic Worship (1983) and Liturgical Music Today (1982) published by the Bishops Committee on the Liturgy.

A recommended list of appropriate musical selections is listed in the appendix of this guideline. Other similar parish resources may also be utilized.

2. GESTURES

The importance of gestures in ritualizing the sacraments is evidenced in the 1978 BCL document Environment and Art in Catholic Worship:

"The liturgy of the Church has been rich in a tradition of ritual movement and gestures. These actions, subtly, yet really, contribute to an environment which can foster prayer or which can distract from prayer. Gestures which are broad and full in both a visual and tactile sense, support the entire symbolic ritual. When the gestures are done by the presiding minister, they can either engage the entire assembly and bring them into an even greater unity, or, if done poorly, they can isolate."

(Environment and Art in Catholic Worship, par. 56)
3. ENVIRONMENT

The design (arrangement) and decor of the spacial environment calls for appropriateness as well:

"There are elements in the environment...which contribute to the overall experience, e.g., the seating arrangement, the placement of liturgical centers of action, temporary decoration, light, acoustics, spaciousness, etc. The environment is appropriate when it is beautiful, when it is hospitable, when it clearly invites and needs an assembly of people to complete it.

Furthermore, it is appropriate when it brings people close together so that they can see and hear the entire liturgical action, when it helps people feel involved and become involved. Such an environment works with the liturgy, not against it.

(Environment and Art in Catholic Worship, par. 24)

4. OBJECTS

Central objects and vessels used in the celebration of the sacraments should be given adequate attention.

"A symbol claims human attention and consciousness...It is important to focus on central symbols and to allow them to be expressed with full depth of their vision."

(Environment and Art in Catholic Worship, par. 86,87)

This principle calls for attention given to the vessels that hold the Oil of the Sick, that which is taken to the home or institution and that which is reserved; the ritual books such as lectionary and sacramentary; candles, cross, tables, vestments, etc.

Objects and gestures combine in an effective ritual when the anointing is done in a way that communicates healing, a noticeable amount of oil accompanied by a gentle rubbing of the oil on the skin.

OUTLINING THE RITES

Based on the liturgical principles and practical applications just stated, one of the following ritual outlines is followed in the actual celebration of the rites. The text and fuller explanations can be found in the ritual texts themselves.
A. ANointING WITHIN MASS

INTRODUCTORY RITES
- Greeting
- Reception of the Sick
- Opening Prayer

LITURGY OF THE WORD
- First Reading
- Responsorial Psalm
- Second Reading (optional)
- Gospel Acclamation (optional)
- Gospel
- Homily

LITURGY OF ANointING
- Litany of Anointing
- Laying on of Hands
- Prayer over the Oil
  (Prayer of thanksgiving over blessed oil
   or blessing of the oil)
- Anointing
- Prayer after Anointing

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST
(special intercessions within the
Eucharistic Prayer)

CONCLUDING RITES
- Blessing
- Dismissal
B. ANOINTING OUTSIDE MASS

INTRODUCTORY RITES
- Greeting
- Sprinkling with Holy Water (optional)
- Instruction
- Penitential Rite

LITURGY OF THE WORD
- Reading
- Response

LITURGY OF ANOINTING
- Litany
- Laying on of Hands
- Prayer over the Oil
  (Prayer of thanksgiving over blessed oil or blessing of the oil)
- Anointing
- Prayer after Anointing
- Lord's Prayer

LITURGY OF HOLY COMMUNION
- Communion
- Silent Prayer
- Prayer after Communion

CONCLUDING RITE
- Blessing
C. **VIATICUM WITHIN MASS**

**INTRODUCTORY RITES**

**LITURGY OF THE WORD**
- Gospel
- Homily
- Baptismal Profession of Faith
- Litany

**LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST**
- Sign of Peace
- Communion as Viaticum

**CONCLUDING RITES**
- Blessing
- (Apostolic Pardon)
- Dismissal

D. **VIATICUM OUTSIDE MASS**

**INTRODUCTORY RITES**
- Greeting
- (Sprinkling with Holy Water)
- Instruction
- Penitential Rite
- (Apostolic Rite)

**LITURGY OF THE WORD**
- Reading
- Homily
- Baptismal Profession of Faith
- Litany

**LITURGY OF VIATICUM**
- Lord’s Prayer
- Communion as Viaticum
- Silent Prayer
- Prayer after Communion

**CONCLUDING RITES**
- Blessing
- Sign of Peace
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS CONCERNING ANOINTING AND VIATICUM

1. WHO MAY ADMINISTER THE SACRAMENT OF ANOINTING?

As the text of Pastoral Care of the Sick (PCS) says in paragraph 16: "The priest is the only proper minister of the anointing of the sick". (see the Code of Canon Law, canon 1006)

This office is ordinarily exercised by bishops, pastors and their parochial vicars, chaplains of health care facilities, and superiors of clerical religious institutes. (canon 1003, 2)

2. WHO MAY ADMINISTER VIATICUM?

The PCS, paragraph 29 states: "The ordinary ministers of viaticum are the parish priest (pastor) and parochial vicars, chaplains, and, for all staying in the house, the superior in clerical religious institutes or societies of apostolic life. In case of necessity or with at least the presumed permission of the competent minister, any priest or deacon may give viaticum, or, if no ordained minister is available, any member of the faithful who has been duly appointed."

3. DOES THE RITE OF ADMINISTERING VIATICUM DIFFER FOR THE ORDAINED AND NON-ORDAINED?

Yes. As paragraph 29 of the PCS states: "A deacon [when administering Viaticum] follows the rite prescribed for a priest in the ritual [of the PCS] (no. 197-209). Other ministers use this same rite or use the rite prescribed for a special minister in the ritual Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass, (nos. 68-78).

4. HOW DOES THE CHURCH DESCRIBE SICKNESS SERIOUS ENOUGH TO MERIT ANOINTING?

The Bishops of the United States, in their commentary on the PCS, state: "To be sick means bodily pain, psychic depression, isolation from one's profession as well as from normal human society, especially as experienced in the family. To be sick means impatience, sulkiness, and excessive preoccupation with self. To be sick means discouragement or even despair, hardness of heart, spiritual dryness.

Sickness is more than a medical phenomenon. Sickness is a crisis situation in the lives of Christians as regards their salvation and their life with Christ in the community of the Church...The benefits of anointing are directed not merely toward salvation in heaven achieved in death, not toward an earthly bodily healing resulting in complete health and recovery in every instance. Rather, the sacramental ministry to the sick expressed in anointing aims at overcoming obstacles to grace and salvation arising from the situation of sickness itself...

The grace of anointing may sometimes result in the restoration of complete health, a clinical cure. But much more likely, the sacrament of anointing will enable Christians in spite of and through the illnesses that afflict them to follow and to identify with the suffering and risen Lord in responding to the call of the Father."
The rite states that in deciding the seriousness of the illness, "if necessary a doctor may be consulted" (no. 8); however, the pastoral judgement regarding the seriousness of the illness must be based on the spiritual and physical condition of the person. It is not merely a medical judgement. One may ask if the prayers of the rite fit the situation of the person. Does the text of the prayers presume a person who is more seriously ill than the person in question? If yes, then in that case, the sacrament should not be celebrated. In making such a decision, pastoral ministers should not become scrupulous, which is itself unhealthy in sacramental practice. (Pastoral Care of the Sick, Study Text 2, NCCB, pp. 33-34)

5. WHO MAY BE ANOINTED?

Canon Law states: "The anointing of the sick can be administered to a member of the faithful who, after having reached the use of reason, begins to be in danger due to sickness or old age. This sacrament can be repeated whenever the sick person again falls into a serious sickness after convalescence or whenever a more serious crisis develops during the same sickness." (Canon 1004, sections 1,2)

The sacrament of anointing presumes that the person to be anointed is baptized and is Catholic. In addition, one does not have to be in danger of death to receive this sacrament. The judgement of being seriously ill qualifies one for anointing.

6. MAY A PERSON BE ANOINTED BEFORE SURGERY?

Yes, a person may be anointed before surgery whenever a serious illness or disability is the reason for the surgery. In such cases, one does not have to wait until one is in the hospital to request the sacrament. It is even preferable to celebrate the sacrament before going to the hospital.

7. WHAT IF A PERSON IS OLD BUT DOES NOT CONSIDER HIMSELF/HERSELF SERIOUSLY ILL?

There are times when old age itself and the fears and isolation that can sometimes accompany it need to be brought to the healing and comforting presence of Christ in this sacrament. As the PCS states: "Elderly people may be anointed if they have become notably weakened even though no serious illness is present" (no. 11).

It is important, however, to avoid the bias of identifying illness with certain age groups. Today, we do not automatically equate high numerical age with fragile health, weakness or inactivity. One needs to be careful of such stereotypes.

8. HOW FREQUENTLY CAN A SICK PERSON RECEIVE THE SACRAMENT OF ANOINTING?

The sacrament may be repeated if the sick person recovers and then falls ill again (with the same or another illness). The sacrament may also be repeated during the same illness if the person's condition becomes more serious.
9. **MAY THE MENTALLY ILL BE ANOINTED?**

Yes, with qualifications. Paragraph 53 of the PCS states: "Some types of mental sickness are now classified as serious. Those who are judged to have serious mental illness and who would be strengthened by the sacrament may be anointed. The sacrament may be repeated in accordance with the conditions for other kinds of serious illness." (see PCS, no. 9)

10. **MAY CHILDREN BE ANOINTED?**

Yes, with qualifications. Those to be anointed must also have attained the use of reason (canon 1004). Where there is doubt that the person has attained the use of reason, the sacrament should be administered (canon 1005). Canon law presumes the use of reason is attained by age seven, but some children may have sufficient use of reason to receive the sacrament at a younger age. Paragraph 12 of the PCS says that children can be anointed if they have sufficient use of reason to be strengthened by the sacrament.

11. **MAY DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED PERSONS BE ANOINTED?**

Developmentally disabled persons who lack the full use of reason, such as the mentally retarded, may be anointed if they can be comforted by the sacrament. This asks for a pastoral judgement. They do not have to have an intellectual understanding of the sacrament or the ability to express their faith rationally; they only need the capacity to be strengthened by the celebration. It is important to remember, however, that mental retardation and other developmental disabilities are not illnesses but are permanent conditions of persons. They too must have a serious illness to be anointed.

Baptized persons who once had the use of reason but have since lost their mental faculties due to senility, unconsciousness, mental illness or some other reason may be anointed (see canon 1006). As paragraph 14 of the PCS states: "The sacrament of anointing may be conferred upon sick people who, although they have lost consciousness or the use of reason, would, as Christian believers, probably have asked for it were they in control of their faculties."

12. **MAY AN UNCONSCIOUS PERSON BE ANOINTED?**

Yes. The sacrament of anointing may be conferred upon sick people who, although they have lost consciousness or the use of reason, would, as Christian believers, probably have asked for it were they in control of their faculties (PCS, no. 14).

13. **MAY THE DEAD BE ANOINTED?**

No. As with all sacraments, the sacrament of anointing can be conferred only on those who are alive. When a priest is called to minister in a situation where a person has just died, it is fitting to use the prayers for the dead found in the PCS, nos. 223-231.
14. **IF THERE IS DOUBT AS TO WHETHER A PERSON IS DEAD, MAY HE/SHE BE ANOINTED?**

Yes. If there is genuine doubt whether a person is dead, the anointing may be administered. (canon 1005) This would presume that the person would probably desire such an anointing if he or she were in control of their faculties. This also presumes a serious but sensitive attempt to truly ascertain whether or not the person is dead. It is to be kept in mind that the tradition of the Church is that sacraments are for the living, not the dead.

15. **WHEN ARE APPROPRIATE TIMES FOR COMMUNAL ANOINTING LITURGIES AND THE USE OF THE RITUAL MASS FOR ANOINTING?**

Paragraph 134 of the PCS offers some guidelines. The ritual Mass for the anointing of the sick is not permitted during the Easter Triduum, on solemnities of Christmas, Epiphany, Ascension, Pentecost, Corpus Christi, or on a solemnity which is a holy day of obligation. On these occasions the texts and readings may be taken from the Mass of the day. Although the ritual Mass is also excluded on the Sundays of Advent, Lent, and the Easter season, on solemnities, Ash Wednesday, and the weekdays of Holy Week, one of the readings may be taken from the scripture texts indicated in the ritual, and the special form of the final blessing may be used.

On those occasions when the ritual Mass for the sick is allowed by the PCS, care should be taken to avoid losing the context of the particular season during which the anointing occurs. The best approach would be to plan ahead so that a Sunday is chosen whose assigned readings (especially if they deal with healing) are appropriate for the anointing of the sick. At no time should the ritual Mass for the sick celebrated on Sunday lose the value of its unity with the larger Church's celebration of Sunday. If a parish celebrates the anointing on a Sunday during the Easter season, the texts of the Mass are for that Sunday, not the ritual Mass for the sick. However, one of the readings from the Mass of anointing may be substituted for one of the assigned readings if this is deemed pastorally beneficial.

Communal anointings may also take place on weekdays as well. Again, sensitivity to the liturgical season is needed.

Many parishes now celebrate two regularly scheduled communal anointings annually, one during the Easter season (e.g. Fourth Sunday of Easter, "Good Shepherd Sunday") and one during the month of October, designated by our nation's bishops as Pro-Life month.

16. **TO RECEIVE THE SACRAMENT OF THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK, WHOM DOES ONE CALL?**

Normally, one's parish is contacted. Any priest may administer the anointing, but ordinarily a person will want to celebrate with those with whom he/she usually worships: pastor, parochial vicar, parish members, family and friends.

If the parish regularly schedules celebrations for the anointing of the sick and the elderly, information can be given regarding the next available parish celebration. If, in discussion with parish ministers, it seems best for the person to be anointed at home, a time can be arranged when a priest is available to come to the home. Family and friends should also be
there to lend support with their prayers and presence, and be strengthened by the sacramental signs. As is indicated in the PCS, "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." (PCS, no. 99)

17. **IF A PERSON IS GOING TO BE ANOINTED AT HOME, WHAT SHOULD BE PREPARED?**

Very little. The priest will bring almost everything he needs with him. Simply prepare an area in which the priest and all those present can gather for prayer: an area in the living room or dining room where those present can be seated comfortably and are able to see and hear, and can participate in the readings and prayers and receive Holy Communion. In the new ritual of 1983, whenever Holy Communion is brought to the sick, or whenever Mass is celebrated in the home of the sick person, not only the sick but all the faithful present may share in the reception of the Body and Blood of the Lord. If a person is so sick that they are confined to bed, the celebration of the sacrament may take place in the bedroom.

The family may want to prepare a small table upon which the priest can place the holy oil and the Blessed Sacrament. The table can be covered with a white cloth. A crucifix reminds us that our sufferings are united with those of our crucified Lord. Candlelight, fresh flowers and what beautifies without cluttering, may reverently welcome those present into the mysteries being celebrated.

18. **WHEN THE PRIEST ARRIVES, WHAT IS HE GOING TO DO? HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?**

After the priest's arrival and introductions of those present, usually there will be a short period of friendly conversation during which he can appraise the situation and see how the sick person is feeling so as to determine which and how many prayers are appropriate. The length of the rite will usually range from ten to forty minutes depending upon the sick person's strength and other pastoral circumstances.

The rite begins much as Mass does: with prayers to gather us into the presence of Christ and of one another, and to recall our continuing need for healing. Holy water may be used to remind us that we have been baptized in Christ who suffered for us and has transformed our suffering into victory. All the sacraments begin with readings from the Bible. The number and length of the readings (and of the homily and general intercessions) will depend on the circumstances. The rite is similar to the first part of the Mass.

After the litany of intercessions, the priest will lay his hands on the sick person's head. Together with all present, he will pray silently for healing. Next, he will bless God for the gift of oil, and anoint the sick person with the blessed oil. First, he will make the sign of the cross with the oil on the forehead, saying: "Through this holy anointing may the Lord in His love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit." All respond "Amen". Then the palms of the hands of the sick person will be anointed with the sign of the cross: "May the Lord who frees you from sin save you and raise you up."
These three elements: 1) the imposition of hands; 2) the blessing over the oil; and 3) the anointing of the forehead and hands, are the core of the sacramental action. Then, depending on whether Eucharist is celebrated or not, one of the following ritual actions continues: 1) bread and wine are brought to the table and the priest continues with the celebration of the Eucharist; or 2) the sick person and those present are invited to receive Holy Communion from bread (and wine) brought by the priest and consecrated at a previous parish Mass; or 3) the rite ends at this point with a prayer and blessing. These choices depend on the rite chosen. (see pp. 8-10 of this guideline)

19. **IF A PRIEST RUNS OUT OF HOLY OIL, WHERE CAN MORE BE OBTAINED?**

From the diocesan Cathedral. Enough oil for the sick is blessed by the Bishop every year at the Chrism Mass to more than likely last for the entire diocese throughout the year. It is preferable, though certainly not necessary, that holy oil be obtained from there. A priest may bless olive oil or another vegetable oil for use in the sacrament.

20. **DOES ONE HAVE TO GO TO CONFESSION BEFORE BEING ANOINTED?**

No. The Anointing of the Sick forgives sins. However, the sacrament is intended for those who are in the state of grace. If the sick person feels alienated from God and the Church through serious sin, then perhaps the Sacrament of Reconciliation is more appropriate than the Sacrament of Anointing. Each sacrament should be allowed to function in its own proper way. The doubling up of sacraments, their prayers and symbols at one time can lessen their impact. The rite states: "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. If it is necessary for the sick person to confess during the celebration of the Sacrament of Anointing, this takes the place of the penitential rite." In this case, the sick person would make his/her confession at the beginning of the priest's visit, prior to the readings from Scripture.

21. **WHAT IF ONE IS ALREADY IN A HOSPITAL, HOW DOES HE/SHE ASK FOR THE SACRAMENT?**

Contact a member of the pastoral care staff at the hospital. Depending on the circumstances of the hospital and the person's illness, arrangements can be made for a priest of the hospital staff or one's own parish priest to come to the hospital room to celebrate the sacrament. It is best if family and friends are also present.

22. **WHAT WAS THE FORMER NAME FOR ANOINTING OF THE SICK? WHAT ARE "LAST RITES"?**

Prior to the Second Vatican Council, this sacrament was called "Extreme Unction". As the name indicates, it was for exceptional cases, often reserved for one's deathbed.

"Last rites", now called "Viaticum" ("food for the journey") refers to reception of Holy Communion by a person near death. This beautiful sacrament can be repeated over several days as the person nears death. This last reception of Eucharist may be administered by any Catholic pastoral minister or special minister of communion as well as by a priest.
RESOURCES

RITES AND COMMENTARIES


Ahlstrom, Michael; Gilmour, Peter; and Tuzik, Robert. A Companion to the Pastoral Care of the Sick. Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago, 1990.


Study Text 2: Pastoral Care of the Sick and Dying. USCC Office for Publishing Services, 1984 revised.

BOOKS, PERIODICALS, AUDIO-VISUAL

About the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. Channing L. Betz, 1983.


Deeken, A. Growing Old and How to Cope With It. New York, Paulist Press, 1972


SUGGESTED MUSIC

(The following list is meant to complement the music in hymnals that you have in your churches and chapels. Acclamations and service music are not included, since that will differ greatly from place to place. This list is by no means complete or exclusive. It is offered as an example of the vast repertoire of excellent sacred music available for sacramental communal celebrations with the sick.)

GLORY AND PRAISE HYMNALS

(North American Liturgy Resources [NALR])

Abba! Father!
All I Ask of You
All Those Who Love Me
Alleluia, People of God
Alleluia, Your Word
Amazing Grace
Answer When I Call
Ashes
At All Times
Before the Sun Burned Bright
Be Glad, O People
Be Not Afraid
Blest Be the Lord
Bread of Rejoicing
By Name I Have Called You
Come, My Children
Come to Me, All Who Are Weary
Come to the Water
Cry of the Poor
Father of Peace
For Everything There is a Time
For You Are My God
Glory and Praise to Our God
God is So Good
Hosea
How Can I Keep From Singing
I Am the Resurrection
If God Is For Us
I Lift Up My Soul

I Long for You
In Your Love Remember Me
Isaiah 49
Jesus, Heal Us
Journeys Ended, Journeys Begun
Lay Your Hands
Lead Us On, O Lord
Like a Shepherd
Lord, to Whom Shall We Go?
May We Praise You?
On Eagle’s Wings
Only A Shadow
Only In God
Only This I Want
Path of Life
Pardon Your People
Peace Is Flowing Like a River
Peace Prayer
Psalm of the Shepherd
Remember Your Love
Shalom
Son of David
Song of Abandonment
Song of Jesus Christ
Take, Lord, Receive
This Alone
Though the Mountains May Fall
PEOPLE'S MASS BOOK  (1984 edition)
(World Library Publications)

215 Abba, Father!
167 Amazing Grace
100 Heart of Christ
88 Into Our Hearts, O Spirit, Come
212 Kindness
116 Lord, Your Almighty Word
168 Loving Father, Ever Waiting
3 O Lord of Light
47 O Lord, You Know Our Weakness
156 O World of God
11 On Jordan's Bank
122 Praise to the Lord
151 Priestly People
2 The King of Glory
54 There's a Wideness in God's Mercy
80 To Be Your Bread
105 Word of God, Come Down on Earth

MUSIC ISSUE  (Annual; numbers change)
(Oregon Catholic Press)

As the Deer Longs
Awake, You Who Sleep
Beatitudes
Bread, Blessed and Broken
Bread For the World Broken
Center of My Life
Come Unto Me
Flow River Flow
Gather Us In
God of Day and God of Darkness
Hold Me In Life
I Will Not Die
I Will Praise You, Lord
Only in God
Shelter Me, O God
We Remember

GATHER
(G.O.A. Publications)

257 All That We Have
151 Awake, Awake and Greet the New Morn
353 Balm in Gilead
263 Be Not Afraid
344 Behold the Lamb
246 Bless the Lord
14 Canticle of Mary/My Soul Gives Glory
251 Center of My Life
142 Come to Set Us Free
237 Confitemini Domino
138 Each Winter As the Year Grows Older
341 Eat This Bread
275 Eye Has Not Seen
258 From My Mother's Womb
357 Healer of Our Every Ill
334 I Have Loved You
208 I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light
188 I Will Be With You
340 In the Breaking of the Bread
354 Jesus, Heal Us
253 Jesus the Lord
335 Jesus, Wine of Peace
212 Lord, to Whom Shall We Go
141 Maranatha
255 My Refuge
137 My Soul in Stillness Waits
303 My Soul is Still
175 Now the Green Blade Rises
278 O Christe Domine Jesu
261 On Eagle's Wings
306 Peace is Flowing Like a River
19 Psalm 22 My God, My God
20 Psalm 23 Shepherd Me, O God
21 Psalm 25 To You, O Lord
22 Psalm 25 To You, O Lord
23 Psalm 27 The Lord is My Light
24 Psalm 30 I Will Praise You Lord
25 Psalm 33 Let Your Mercy Be On Us
25 Psalm 33 The Earth is Full of the Goodness
27 Psalm 34 Taste and See
26 Psalm 34 The Cry of the Poor
28 Psalm 42 Song of the Exile
32 Psalm 62 In God Alone
33 Psalm 63 As Morning Breaks
34 Psalm 63 My Soul is Thirsting
35 Psalm 66 Let All the Earth
(GATHER HYMNAL...continued)

39 Psalm 84 Happy Are They Who Dwell in Your House
38 Psalm 84 How Lovely Is Your Dwelling Place
42 Psalm 91 Be With Me
46 Psalm 103 The Lord is Kind and Merciful
52 Psalm 121 Our Help Comes from the Lord
60 Psalm 146 Lord, Come and Save Us
61 Psalm 147 Bless the Lord, My Soul
276 Shelter Me, O God
217 Sing of the Lord's Goodness
247 Song of St. Patrick
166 Stay Here and Keep Watch
170 Stay With Me
338 Taste and See
209 The Lord is My Life
274 The Lord is My Shepherd
259 The Lord is Near
262 Though the Mountains May Fall
139 Wait for the Lord
230 We Live a Mystery
321 We Shall Rise Again
350 We Will Rise Again
256 When From Our Exile
174 Wherever You Go
248 Your Love is Finer Than Life

WORSHIP III
(G.I.A. Publications)

490 All You Who Seek A Comfort Sure
583 Amazing Grace
577 By Gracious Powers
594 Christian, Do You Hear the Lord
569 Come, My Way, My Truth, My Life
677 Day is Done
746 Great God of Mercy
749 He Healed the Darkness of My Mind
585 How Firm a Foundation
610 How Good the Name of Jesus Sounds
607 I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say
593 I Sought the Lord
611 Jesus, Lead the Way
568 Lord of All Hopefulness
587 Morning Glory, Starlit Sky
606 My Shepherd Will Supply My Need
747 O Christ the Healer
541 O God Beyond All Praising
642 O God, Empower Us
748 O Son of God, in Galilee
580 Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God
751 Silence! Frenzied, Unclean Spirit
634 Take Up Your Cross
612 The Living God My Shepherd Is
613 The Lord, the Lord, the Lord is My Shepherd
752 The Master Came to Bring Good News
608 There is a Balm in Gilead
595 There's a Wideness in God's Mercy
596 There's a Wideness in God's Mercy
600 What Wondrous Love is This
750 Your Hands, O Lord, in Days of Old