

THE SACRAMENT OF THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK
CANONS 998-1007

1. 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_(SIC) 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)

2. 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.

3. Subject of the Sacrament (c. 1004)

- a. The seriously ill and the elderly. Persons whose health is seriously impaired by sickness or old age who are dangerously ill may receive this sacrament.
- b. Repetition. 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. Surgery. A person may be anointed before surgery whenever a serious illness is the reason for the surgery (Rite of Anointing, #10).
- d. Children. Sick children may be anointed if they have reached the age of reason (c. 1004).
- e. Elderly. People may be anointed if they have become notably weakened although no serious illness is present (Rite of Anointing, #11).
- f. The Unconscious. 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. The Deceased. 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 his/her sins and graciously receives him/her into his kingdom. THE PRIEST IS NOT TO ADMINISTER THE SACRAMENT.
- h. Mentally Ill. There is no explicit reference in the canons. Judgment to anoint is made if the person is seriously ill.

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.

4. 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.

5. Matter for the Sacrament

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

6. The Last Rites

- a. Commendation of the dying
- b. Viaticum - communion of the sick
- c. Apostolic Blessing - the formula for this blessing (Chapter IV, Rite for those near death, #122).