

Sacrament for the Anointing of the Sick
A Celebration of Mercy
October 15 at 11:30am Mass

Do YOU know someone who is a: **child or adult about to undergo or recovering from surgery; or someone experiencing or being treated for a serious physical or mental illness; or who is physically handicapped or seriously impaired by old age?** If so, then we would like to invite them to receive this sacrament.

Of the seven sacraments, the Church classifies two as the sacraments of healing: Reconciliation (often known as Confession) and Anointing of the Sick. Each involves healing the human person; one for our spiritual health and the other for our physical well-being. How these sacraments have been practiced in the life of the Church has differed over time. This brief summary is about the anointing of the sick.

Historically, oil was widely used in the ancient world for a variety of life purposes: lighting, cooking, athletic preparation, special marking and especially healing wounds. So, it is not surprising that the New Testament includes reference to the use of oil, once in Mark's gospel and again in a letter of the apostle, James.

In the life of the early church, the common use of oil for healing was given a special blessing by the bishop to call upon God's power for the benefit of the sick. During the early centuries, the application of the blessed oil could be done by any of the baptized faithful, since it was primarily for the healing of physical defects. In later centuries, it began to be associated with the dying to heal the soul before death, especially as it was done concurrently with one's last confession. During these later centuries, this concurrent use of the two sacraments led to limiting the sacramental anointing to those who were ordained, in particular, the priest.

All sacraments are for the benefit of the individual, but we are all members of the Body of Christ. So, when one member of the body is afflicted, so is the whole body. And as the physical body makes an effort to assist healing the afflicted part, so also the spiritual body is involved in healing the injured member. To reflect this theology, the Church encourages this sacrament to be administered to the greatest extent possible in a public way, even if administered in a hospital or nursing home. So, the sacramental ritual provides for celebrating the anointing as part of a community liturgy, such as Mass, much as we do for baptisms, first communions, and the other sacraments.

At St. Matthew's, our communal celebration is being celebrated on the Sunday closest to the feast of St. Luke, who is particularly associated with the sick. There will be a similar celebration in February to enable our parishioners who attend the 1:00pm Spanish Mass to participate in this special sacramental celebration.

“If anyone of you is ill, he should send for the elders of the church, and they must anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord and pray over him.” (James 5: 14)

Deacon Bart Merella