

The Sacrament of the Sick

Next weekend, June 29th and 30th, we will offer the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick at every Mass. This is an opportunity to place our maladies and weaknesses in the hands of the Lord.

Anointing has symbolized strength and healing since pre-Christian times. Ancient soldiers oiled their bodies before going into battle in the belief that it made them stronger. While I wonder whether that practice made any difference, oil does have real curative powers. We still use it to salve burns and rashes and we eat oil with other foods for its nutritional value.



James Tissot, Christ raising the daughter of Jairus from the dead, 1897. (Detail.)

The Church anoints the sick following the example of Jesus. Christ comes to us, lifting us up from the misery of sickness as a sign of our risen life in the kingdom to come. We are either healed or enabled to cope with an illness through the grace of this sacrament. Whatever can be said of our physical condition after receiving the anointing, we know that God's grace has made us spiritually whole.

Who should receive the Sacrament of the Sick? If you have a condition that requires the attention of a doctor, whether chronic or acute, you qualify to receive the sacrament. If you have a pending operation or other medical procedure, that also qualifies you to receive anointing.

If you are elderly, even in good health, you may receive the sacrament. Almost anything that impairs your ability carry on a normal life—beyond just feeling a little blue once in a while—might be considered cause for anointing. I leave the reception of this sacrament to your good judgment.

We offer the Anointing of the Sick four times a year at Sunday Mass, on months in which we have a fifth Sunday. In addition, Fr. Wilson and I try to visit those confined to home or healthcare facilities at least twice a year. If you need the sacrament outside of these times, please let us know. If you are planning for surgery or a procedure that you believe warrants anointing, let one of the priests know and we'll be glad to anoint you following Mass any Saturday or Sunday.

In case of an emergency, you are always free to call our emergency line. Our automated phone system can put you through to a priest in case of need.

