

**Sacrament for the Anointing of the Sick**  
**A Celebration of Healing**  
**Sunday, October 15, 2023 at the 11am Mass**

This is a special announcement for anyone, **child or adult, who is about to undergo or is recovering from surgery, anyone experiencing or being treated for a serious physical or mental illness or condition, or anyone who is physically handicapped or seriously impaired by old age.**

Of the seven sacraments, the Church classifies two of them as the sacraments of healing: Reconciliation (usually known as Confession) and Anointing of the Sick. Each of them 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 another 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 concurrent with one's last confession. Thus, during these later centuries, this concurrent use of both sacraments led to limiting the sacramental anointing to those who were ordained, i.e. a 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 overall is known to assist in 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 as much as possible in a public way (namely, the community at large), 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 the Mass, much as we do for baptisms, first communions, and the other sacraments.

At St. Matthew's, our communal celebration is celebrated on the Sunday closest to the feast of St. Luke, who is especially associated with the sick. There will be a similar celebration in February for our Hispanic parishioners to participate in this special sacramental celebration. We encourage your presence and participation. **NOTE: If you know someone, not present, who is sick, let us know to contact them for possible anointing at this Mass.**

"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)

(Retired) Deacon Bart Merella