



The Sacraments:

Anointing of the Sick

"This sacred anointing of the sick was instituted by Christ our Lord as a true and proper sacrament of the New Testament. It is alluded to indeed by Mark, but is recommended to the faithful and promulgated by James the apostle and brother of the Lord"

(CCC 1511; Mark 6:13; Jas. 5:14-15).

Historical Background and Biblical Background:

The Sacrament through the ages



Early Practices :

The sacrament took shape from the healings of Jesus and the practices of his first followers.

It drew heavily from the passage from James 5:14-16:

“Is anyone among you sick? He should summon the presbyters of the church, and they should pray over him and anoint (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, he will be forgiven.” (NAB)

The elders had the specific role of praying over the sick and anointing them with oil, which they understood to be endowed with special power from the Holy Spirit. Believers should believe they would be saved, raised, forgiven and healed.

Through the Centuries..



Early Third Century

Apostolic Tradition, written around 235 AD and traditionally attributed to Hippolytus, was one of the earliest liturgical manuals. It included a blessing for oil to be used for anointing the sick.

Fifth Century

The first document of the Magisterium that speaks explicitly of the Anointing of the Sick is a letter of Pope Innocent I to Decentius, Bishop of Gubbio (19 March 416).

The Pope, in commenting on the words of the Letter of James, was reacting to an interpretation which held that only presbyters and not Bishops were the ministers of the sacrament; he rejects this limitation, writing that Bishops as well as presbyters are the ministers of the sacrament (cf. DS 216). (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith

Through the Centuries..



First Millennium

The sacrament became tied to the once-only policy for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Since it could only be administered once after Baptism, many waited until their deathbed for absolution. It became known as “Extreme Unction.”

Fifteenth Century

In 1439 AD, the Council of Florence described the sacrament as follows:

- ☐ To use olive oil blessed by a priest.
- ☐ Only given to the sick if death is expected.
- ☐ Person is anointed on eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth, hands, feet and loins.
- ☐ The minister of the sacrament is a priest.
- ☐ Effect is to cure the mind, body, and soul.

The practice at that time was for a priest to be accompanied by a procession of believers when he visited the dying. The dying received absolution, the Eucharist (as viaticum-food for the journey) and extreme unction.

Some or all of the penitential psalms were read, as was one of the Gospel accounts of Our Lord's passion and death.

During this time the church developed the rite to include a commendation for the dying person, prayers for the dead, and prayers for the bereaved after the person died

Through the Centuries..



Sixteenth Century

In 1551 AD, the Council of Trent, in response to protestant reformers who talked of the permanent efficacy of baptism throughout Christian life, insisted on the sacramental status of “Extreme Unction.” They said that the sacrament is “to be administered to the sick, especially to those who are so seriously ill that they seem near to death; hence it is also called the sacrament of the dying.” The effects of the sacrament are “it confers grace, remits sin, and comforts the sick.” (Council of Trent)

Twentieth Century

In 1963, the Vatican II Council wanted the name of the sacrament be changed and wanted the rites to be revised to be more faithful to the ancient mind and tradition of the Church. They emphasized the following points:

- Change the name to Anointing of the Sick.
- Viaticum should be regarded as the true sacrament of the dying.
- The anointing of the sick was rather to be seen as an expression of God’s presence in the midst of human illness and Christ’s healing power and concern for all those who are seriously sick. (SC 73-75)

Anointing of the sick



The Code of Canon Law

TITLE V.
THE SACRAMENT OF THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK (Cann. 998 - 1007)

Can. 998 The anointing of the sick, by which the Church commends the faithful who are dangerously ill to the suffering and glorified Lord in order that he relieve and save them, is conferred by anointing them with oil and pronouncing the words prescribed in the liturgical books.

The Code of Canon Law

THE CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT

Can. 999 In addition to a bishop, the following can bless the oil to be used in the anointing of the sick:

1/ those equivalent to a diocesan bishop by law; 2/ any presbyter in a case of necessity, but only in the actual celebration of the sacrament.

Can. 1000 §1. The anointings with the words, order, and manner prescribed in the liturgical books are to be performed carefully. In a case of necessity, however, a single anointing on the forehead or even on some other part of the body is sufficient, while the entire formula is said.

§2. The minister is to perform the anointings with his own hand, unless a grave reason warrants the use of an instrument.

Can. 1001 Pastors of souls and those close to the sick are to take care that the sick are consoled by this sacrament at the appropriate time.

Can. 1002 The communal celebration of the anointing of the sick for many of the sick at once, who have been suitably prepared and are properly disposed, can be performed according to the prescripts of the diocesan bishop.



The Code of Canon Law

THOSE ON WHOM THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK IS TO BE CONFERRED

Can. 1004 §1. The anointing of the sick can be administered to a member of the faithful who, having reached the use of reason, begins to be in danger due to sickness or old age.

§2. This sacrament can be repeated if the sick person, having recovered, again becomes gravely ill or if the condition becomes more grave during the same illness.

Can. 1005 This sacrament is to be administered in a case of doubt whether the sick person has attained the use of reason, is dangerously ill, or is dead.

Can. 1006 This sacrament is to be conferred on the sick who at least implicitly requested it when they were in control of their faculties.

Can. 1007 The anointing of the sick is not to be conferred upon those who persevere obstinately in manifest grave sin.

Works Cited
Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. "Note on the Minister of the Sacra

Ritual: The Celebration of the Sacrament



The oil to be used in the anointing of the sick can be blessed not only by a Bishop but also by:

those who are in law equivalent to the diocesan Bishop;
in a case of necessity, any priest but only in the actual celebration of the sacrament.

The anointings are to be carried out accurately, with the words and in the order and manner prescribed in the liturgical books. In a case of necessity, however, a single anointing on the forehead, or even on another part of the body, is sufficient while the full formula is recited. The minister is to anoint with his own hand, unless a grave reason indicates the use of an instrument.

Pastors of souls and those who are close to the sick are to ensure that the sick are helped by this sacrament in good time.

The communal celebration of anointing of the sick, for a number of the sick together, who have been appropriately prepared and are rightly disposed, may be held in accordance with the regulations of the diocesan Bishop.

More from the ritual..




Until the Second Vatican Council, the anointing had to be with olive oil blessed by the bishop. This is still the ordinary material used in the administration of this sacrament. But Pope Paul VI decided that since olive oil is unobtainable or difficult to obtain in some parts of the world, in the future any oil “obtained from plants” could be used.

Moreover, in keeping with the directives of the Council, the ritual was simplified. The formal papal declaration deserves to be fully quoted.

The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is administered to those who are dangerously ill, by anointing them on the forehead and hands with olive oil, or if opportune, with another vegetable oil properly blessed, and saying once only the following words:

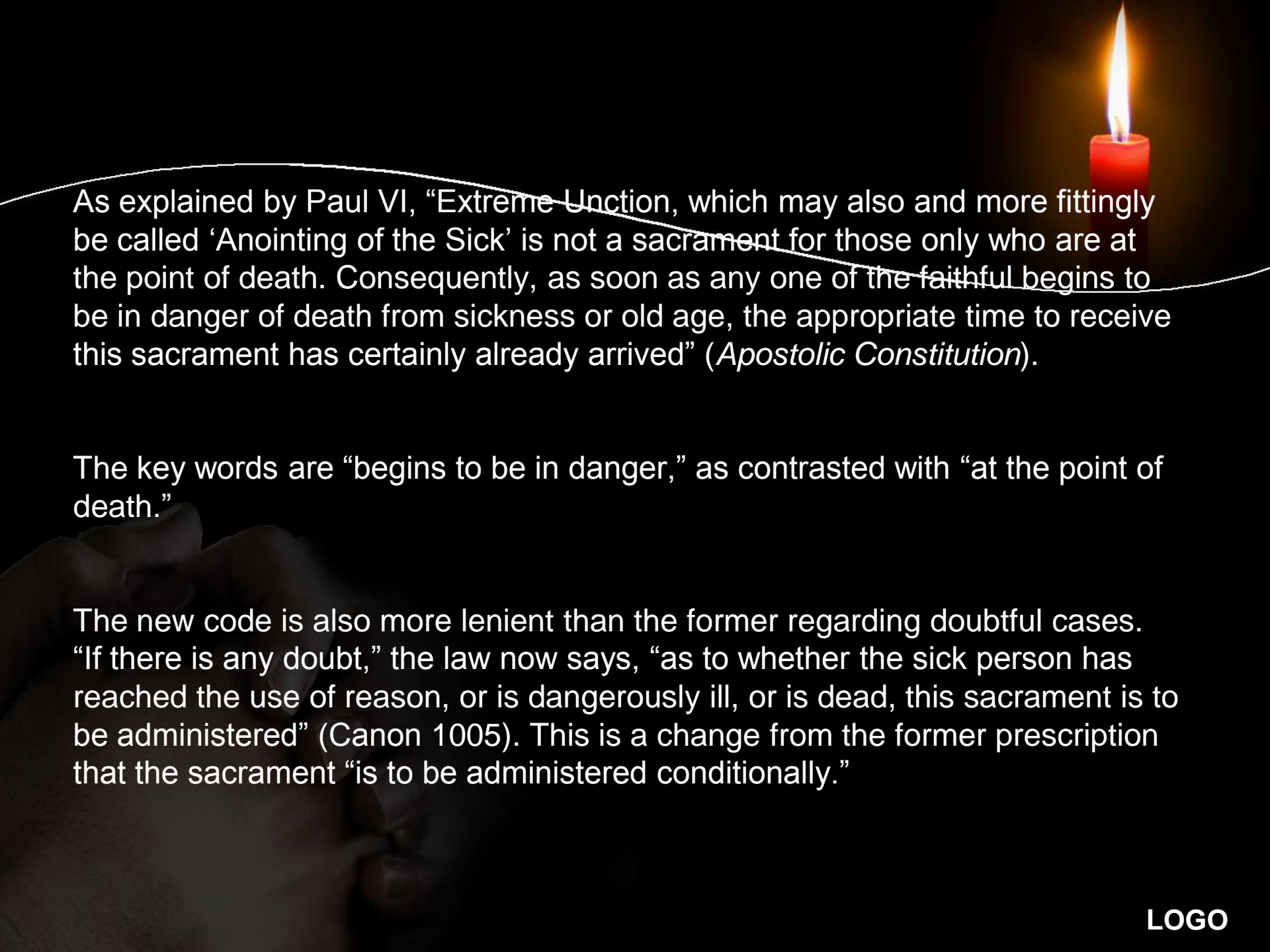
“Through this holy anointing and His most loving mercy, may the Lord assist you by the grace of the Holy Spirit, so that freed from your sins, He may save you and in His goodness raise you up” (*Apostolic Constitution on the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick*, November 30, 1972).



In case of necessity, it is sufficient that a single anointing be given on the forehead. In fact, if the particular condition of the sick person warrants it, another suitable part of the body may be anointed, while pronouncing the whole formula.

The sacrament can be repeated under two circumstances:

- If the sick person, having been once anointed, recovers and then falls sick again.
- If in the course of the same sickness, the danger becomes more serious.
- According to the directives of Canon Law, “the Anointing of the Sick can be administered to any member of the faithful who, having reached the age of reason, begins to be in danger due to sickness or old age” (Canon 1004).



As explained by Paul VI, “Extreme Unction, which may also and more fittingly be called ‘Anointing of the Sick’ is not a sacrament for those only who are at the point of death. Consequently, as soon as any one of the faithful begins to be in danger of death from sickness or old age, the appropriate time to receive this sacrament has certainly already arrived” (*Apostolic Constitution*).

The key words are “begins to be in danger,” as contrasted with “at the point of death.”

The new code is also more lenient than the former regarding doubtful cases. “If there is any doubt,” the law now says, “as to whether the sick person has reached the use of reason, or is dangerously ill, or is dead, this sacrament is to be administered” (Canon 1005). This is a change from the former prescription that the sacrament “is to be administered conditionally.”



Two further provisions exist in the Church's general law. One concerns the kind of desire a person must have to receive anointing, and the other concerns people who are living in notorious sin. On the one hand, therefore, "this sacrament is to be administered to the sick who, when they were in possession of their faculties, at least implicitly asked for it" (Canon 1006).

On the other hand, "the Anointing of the Sick is not to be conferred upon those who obstinately persist in a manifestly grave sin" (Canon 1007). Between these two situations lies the whole issue of having the proper dispositions to receive the graces available through anointing.

Effects of the sacrament

The Church explains the words of St. James about the effect of anointing by distinguishing two kinds of blessing which this sacrament confers. The principal blessing is for the soul, the secondary is for the body.

How is the soul blessed by the Holy Spirit through anointing? In several ways: The guilt of mortal sin is removed, so that a sinner is restored to God's friendship. With the guilt the eternal punishment due to mortal sin is also removed. On this level, anointing has the same effect as Baptism and the sacrament of Penance. Moreover, the sorrow required for remission of sin is the fear of God, based on faith, which makes anointing so precious. Even though a person is unconscious when anointed, yet he is restored to God's grace with the minimum requirement of what we call imperfect contrition, which means sorrow for sin because a believer fears the just punishments of an offended God.

Also, the guilt and temporal punishment of venial sins are removed, depending on the dispositions of the person anointed.

Temporal punishment still due to forgiven sins is removed, again depending on the spiritual dispositions with which the sacrament of anointing is received.





Anointing strengthens the sick person in especially two ways:

Trust in God's mercy is deepened by reassuring the one anointed that, no matter how deeply God had been offended, He is a loving God who wants only the salvation of the sinner.

Courage is received to face the future, especially the prospect of death. A person is prepared to enter eternity with a peaceful acceptance of God's will.

Anointing gives extraordinary patience in enduring whatever sufferings are experienced, and enables the one anointed to resist the temptations of the devil to discouragement or even despair.

Symbols for the sacrament

Symbols of this sacrament include the **laying on of hands**, and the **anointing with oil on the forehead** and the **palms of both hands**.

The laying on of hands symbolizes the Spirit of God being called down – the very presence of the Lord putting his hands on our head. The oil is a sign that God ‘has put his seal upon us and given the Spirit in our hearts. Through the anointing we are strengthened for what lies ahead.





Let us all REMEMBER:

The priest is the one who prays, and it is **God** who heals, for the sacrament is not a person's work but the work of God.