



The Unction of the Sick

“Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up” (James 14 &15).





Introduction



- How many church sacraments are there?
- **Seven** – Baptism, Confirmation, Repentance and Confession, Holy Eucharist, Matrimony, Unction of the Sick, Priesthood.
- The first five sacraments (Baptism, Confirmation, Repentance and Confession, Holy Eucharist) are necessary for salvation, i.e. we cannot be saved without them.
- The sacraments of Matrimony and Unction of the Sick are NOT necessary for our salvation but are useful for the church and the believers. This means that man does not marry to be saved, but he who wants to marry is offered marriage in the form of the holy sacrament by the church. The same goes for he who is sick. It is not necessary for anyone to fall ill, so that we may pray over him to save him ... but those who fall ill the church will offer them the sacrament of the Unction of the Sick



So Why Does The Church Have This Sacrament



- All sacraments are means for the growth and the up building of the church. The church is composed of the group of believers who together form the mystical Body of Christ. The organs of the Body are connected and bound together by the holy fellowship with the One Head. Therefore the church is concerned with the spirituality of her members and she is also interested in the health of their bodies as they are all holy bodies because the Holy Spirit abides in them and because they all receive Holy Communion (The Holy Body and the Holy Blood of the Lord).
 - The church cares for us... St Paul writes “And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it” (1 Corinthians 12:26).
 - Therefore the church gives us two Sacraments for ‘healing’; one for spiritual illness, which is the Sacrament of Repentance & Confession, the other for physical and psychological illness, which is the Sacrament of the Unction of the Sick.
- “But to you who fear My name The Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings.” (Mal 4:2)**

Where Did the Sacrament Originate From:

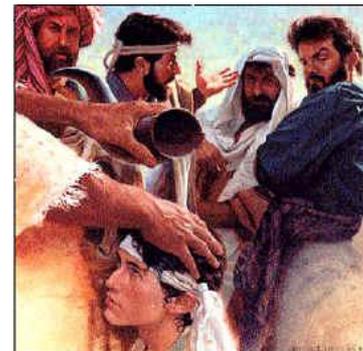
- **Institution of The Sacrament:**

- We do not know the exact time or occasion when our Lord instituted this Sacrament, which is no surprise for there are many things that the Lord did that were not written one by one (**Jn 21:25**), but we know that the Lord said:

“Heal the sick, cleanse the leper.” (**Mt 10:8**)

“Whatever city you enter, and they received you ... **heal the sick** who are there.” (**Lk 10:8-9**)

- We also know that the disciples: “Anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed them.” (**Mk 6:13**)
- Therefore it is understood that the apostles, having been sent by the Lord, were instructed to undertake this sacrament.



- St. James also said:

“Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders (priests) of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed.” **(Jam 5:14-16)**

- Here St. James is talking about both the Sacraments of Confession and Anointing of the Sick. This is not an ordinary means of healing sickness because it is administered by the priests and not by any person.

- Since the apostles did not preach their own gospel but delivered to us what they had previously received from the Lord, the church believes St. James and the apostles must have received this teaching directly from the Lord.

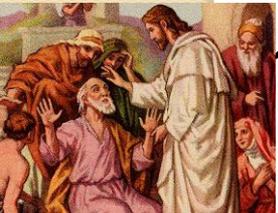




The Rite of the Sacrament

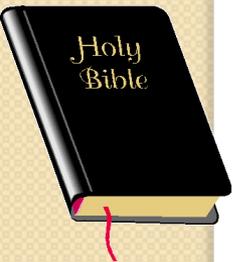
- PREPERATION

Prior to undertaking the Rite of the Unction of the sick the priest comes and persuades the patient to repent; he comforts him with words of grace, receives his confession, gives him absolution from his sins and only after they have been absolved of sin, should the prayers of the Unction of the sick (see below) be undertaken.



THE PRAYERS

- The rituals begin with the prayer of thanksgiving because the thankful nature is that of the sons and the angels, and it is only ... slaves that grumble because they do not understand or know their masters will.
- Thus, the sick is lead to the life of thanksgiving and submission with satisfaction and trust in God's love and will.
- Then we pray the psalm of repentance (Psalm 50) in which the church tells us that disease and death came into the world because of sin and Adam's disobedience ... and that man cannot be saved except through repentance. This is the same fact, which our teacher James the apostle declared, "And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven ... confess your trespasses to one another" (James 5:15,16).
- Then we read some passages from the Bible, Psalms and parts from the Gospel that speak about repentance, miracles of healing and granting the disciples the authority of healing.
- This is done seven times and hence the Rite is composed of seven prayers. They are all similar in order. In each prayer, the priest lights a wick. By the seventh prayer we have seven lit wicks, giving light. This reminds us of a bright scene in heaven. St. John describes this scene: "I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet ... the seven lampstands which you





- By this church reminds us of Christ who walks along the seven golden lampstands (Revelation 2:1) so that we may be comforted in our affliction and pain and illness because we know that our Lord Jesus Christ dwells among us.



- When the priest lights a wick, we anticipate that all seven wicks are about to be lit and that the church whispers to us: “The Lord is coming”. In fact, when all the seven wicks are lit, the prayers are complete. Through prayers and Hymns, the Lord dwells among the seven lampstands and gives us comfort.

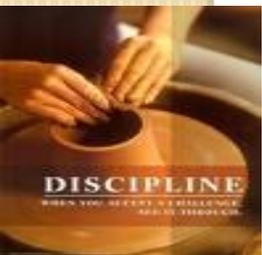


- When prayers are completed, the priest anoints the sick with oil and through the grace of the Holy Spirit the sick man is healed of his spiritual or physical diseases. This sacrament has a wonderful effectiveness of healing both the soul and the body according to the worthiness and faith of the sick man, as “The prayer of faith will save the sick man and the Lord will raise him up”.



Why do people sometimes receive this Sacrament and yet are not healed?

- At times the sick person may not recover quickly after the Sacrament or may take a long time to heal, and at times the sick person may even die. There are many reasons for this, of which some are ...
 - Lack of faith of the sick person, just like the people of Nazareth: “The Lord Jesus did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief” (Matthew 13:58).
 - He may not be worthy of being healed due to his evil doings and reluctance to repent and return to God, who says, “***Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backsliding***” (Jeremiah 3:22).
 - Sickness may result in death, and death is the great recovery and salvation from all bodily pains.





- Sickness may be for chastisement and God may abolish it when its purpose is accomplished, just like Job who was sick for seven years. Likewise, Moses' sister Miriam, was struck by leprosy when she spoke badly against Moses. Then Moses prayed for her saying: **“Please, heal her, O God, I pray!” and the Lord said to him, ‘Let her be shut out of the camp seven days, and after that she may be received again’**” (Numbers 12), that is, healed from leprosy.



- At times a person may not recover from, his illness, and this is divine wisdom, which we cannot understand or interpret: “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out” (Romans 11:33).

St Paul had a thorn in his side and prayed for God to heal him, but the Lord refused, saying, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

God worked amazing miracles by the hands of St. Paul, “So that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them.”

Why does the Church perform this Sacrament to the whole congregation on the last Friday of the Lent?



- During the Holy Week of Pascha, the Church does not perform this Sacrament and therefore performs it and anoints the entire congregation on the last Friday of the Lent. Moreover, many are weak from fasting and this anointing helps them to continue with the scheduled prayers and food abstinence of the Pascha.

