

Anointing of the Sick – Additional Information

What is the significance of Jesus' compassion for the sick?

The compassion of Jesus toward the sick and his healing so many of the infirm were a clear sign that with him had come the Kingdom of God and therefore victory over sin, over suffering, and over death. By his own passion and death he gave new meaning to our suffering which, when united with his own, can become a means of purification and of salvation for us and for others.

What is the attitude of the Church toward the sick?

Having received from the Lord the charge to heal the sick, the Church strives to carry it out by taking care of the sick and accompanying them with her prayer of intercession. Above all, the Church possesses a sacrament specifically intended for the benefit of the sick. This sacrament was instituted by Christ and is attested by Saint James: "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call in the presbyters of the Church and let them pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord" (James 5:14-15).

How is this sacrament celebrated?

The celebration of this sacrament consists essentially in an anointing with oil which may be blessed by the bishop. The anointing is on the forehead and on the hands of the sick person (in the Roman rite) or also on other parts of the body (in the other rites) accompanied by the prayer of the priest who asks for the special grace of this sacrament.

What are the effects of this sacrament?

This sacrament confers a special grace which unites the sick person more intimately to the Passion of Christ for his good and for the good of all the Church. It gives comfort, peace, courage, and even the forgiveness of sins if the sick person is not able to make a confession. Sometimes, if it is the will of God, this sacrament even brings about the restoration of physical health. In any case, this anointing prepares the sick person for the journey to the Father's House.

Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, questions 314-315, 318-319