

## TERMINOLOGY

Following the Council of Trent until the promulgation of the Apostolic Constitution **Sacram Unctionem Infirmorum** in 1972, what was known as Extreme Unction is more properly described as Anointing of the Sick.

### Liturgical Formulæ

- Anointing of the Sick

*“Through this holy anointing may the Lord in his love and mercy, help you by the grace of the Holy Spirit. May the Lord who frees you from sin, save you and raise you up.”*

- Viaticum Outside Mass

*“Jesus Christ is the food for our journey; he calls us to the heavenly table.”*

*“This is the bread of life. Taste and see that the Lord is good.”*

If the individual’s health permits, it is preferable that, prior to receiving Viaticum, the individual facing death renews the baptismal profession of faith.



# SPIRITUAL CARE

*for the*  
**Seriously Ill & Dying**

The Office of Pastoral Care, St. Vincent Hospital, Worcester, MA



“IS ANY ONE AMONG YOU SICK? HE SHOULD CALL THE ELDERS OF THE CHURCH TO PRAY OVER HIM AND ANOINT HIM WITH OIL IN THE NAME OF THE LORD. AND THE PRAYER OFFERED IN FAITH WILL MAKE THE SICK PERSON WELL; THE LORD WILL RAISE HIM UP. IF HE HAS SINNED, HE WILL BE FORGIVEN.”

— Jas 5: 14-15



LORD...SEND THE HOLY SPIRIT,  
OUR HELPER AND FRIEND.

# ANOINTING OF THE SICK

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states, “By the sacred anointing of the sick and the prayer of the priests the whole Church commends those who are ill to the suffering and glorified Lord, that he may raise them up and save them. And indeed she exhorts them to contribute to the good of the People of God by freely uniting themselves to the Passion and death of Christ” (CCC, n. 1499)

IF ANY MAN BE AT THE POINT  
OF DEATH, HE MUST NOT  
BE DEPRIVED OF THE LAST AND  
MOST INDISPENSABLE VIATICUM

## GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The Church envisions a distinction between the spiritual care provided for the seriously ill or those who are advanced in age—though not seriously ill—and the care provided for the dying patient.

**Anointing of the Sick** is meant to be seen as the sacrament for the believer whose illness or condition is serious or life-threatening, whereas **Viaticum or Last Communion** is the spiritual care provided for the person whose diagnosis is terminal and for whom the prospect of death is a reality.

**Forgiveness of Sins** — From the earliest times, Anointing of the Sick has been associated with confession and the forgiveness of sins. Saint Caesarius of Arles said, “*See to it...that whoever is ill hasten to the church, both that he may receive health of body and will merit to obtain the forgiveness of his sins.*”



## Requirements

- Individual is seriously ill, faces life-threatening surgery, is elderly and debilitated though not truly ill, or a sick child who has not reached the age of reason
- Having been anointed once is sufficient, unless during the same illness the person’s condition worsens OR they recover and fall seriously ill again
- Unconscious patient may be anointed if reasonable to assume that they would have asked to be anointed. If person is already dead, he or she should not be anointed

## Effects of the Anointing

- Union with the Passion of Christ
- Strength to endure personal suffering
- Forgiveness of sins (if the sick individual is not able to avail themselves of confession)
- Restoration of health if such a recovery is conducive to his or her salvation
- Preparation for passing over from death to eternal life

## Viaticum—Last Rites

The last rites can be ordered in one of two different ways: either the **Continuous Rites**, which includes Penance (or Confession), Confirmation (when lacking), Anointing of the Sick, and Viaticum, or the **Rite for Emergencies**, which includes Penance, the Apostolic Pardon, the Lord’s Prayer, Communion as Viaticum, Anointing (if not already received). The most important element is the reception of Viaticum or final Communion. The faithful are bound to receive Viaticum (Can. 921 §1). This obligation is found expressed in the Council of Nicaea, “Concerning the departing, the ancient canonical law is still to be maintained, to wit, that, if any man be at the point of death, he must not be deprived of the last and most indispensable Viaticum” (Can. 13).

