

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The second sacrament of forgiveness is the Anointing of the Sick. In the past this sacrament was called "The Last Rites" because it was so often kept only for someone on their deathbed.

The Second Vatican Council rightly restored this sacrament to be used for any case of serious illness or for healing before major surgery. This is because it is not only a forgiving sacrament, but therefore, a healing sacrament.

Anointing of the Sick is called a forgiving sacrament because by the sacrament itself the person is forgiven all their sin. This is especially comforting in the case of a sick person who is unable to make their confession.

The candidate for Anointing is any Catholic who is sick and who asks for the sacrament. While a priest can pray with other Christians, he is not to administer Anointing except to a Catholic. However, when a person is dying and if they ask for the sacrament, they may receive it if they are baptized, even if they are not Catholic. If possible, in such situations they should also be Confirmed and receive Communion.

The proper minister of Anointing of the Sick is a validly ordained Catholic priest. Only a priest may anoint because only the priest is authorized by the church to forgive sins, and Anointing is a forgiving sacrament. The proper form is the words from the Catholic Rite of Anointing and the proper matter for the sacrament is the oil blessed by the bishop for that purpose.

Anointing of the Sick continues Christ's healing work in the world, and the healing is not just physical, but more deeply, it is a healing of the body, mind and spirit--the healing of relationships and the forgiveness of sin.

Your Pastor,
Fr. Longenecker