



## A few thoughts from your pastor on the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick Part I

Those of us old enough to remember, know all about the "Last Rites?" Or do we? In my home, I still have the crucifix that hung on our family wall as I grew up. This crucifix opened up, revealing two candles (with places to put them) and holy water in case we ever had to call the priest, day or night in the event that someone in the family was in need of the Last Rites. For the last, almost 60 years since we first purchased this crucifix, it has never been used!

Often times, Father Jean-Pierre and I will receive a call requesting the Last Rites and often times these calls come from folks who do not understand what the "Last Rites" are. The "Last Rites" are actually the prayers and reception of Holy Communion as we receive "Viaticum" which is food for our journey to heaven. The Sacrament itself was called "Extreme Unction." And "Extreme Unction" was the sacrament reserved for those who were not only in grave danger of death, but more often than not, it was reserved for the last moments of life. It was not unusual for a family to wait until the person was just minutes away from death before they called for a priest and the anointing.

Not so these days! Parishioners are encouraged to share in the sacrament early in their illness, before surgery, and are even encouraged to receive this sacrament because they are elderly.

We no longer call this Sacrament "Extreme Unction," (Last Anointing) for it is known now as the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick and the prayers reflect the hope that the Lord's grace and healing power will touch the life of the person who is ill.

On the weekend of November 22 & 23, after each Mass, we will celebrate the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick to all who are eligible. Who is eligible?

1. You must be alive!
2. You must be a baptized Catholic
3. You must have reached the age of reason
4. You need to be in danger (not imminent danger however) due to
  - a. Illness
  - b. Infirmities of old age
  - c. Surgery
5. And you need to be repentant of any sins you may have committed since your last

Next week, I will share a few thoughts and reflections from our recent popes and the bishops of the Church on this powerful Sacrament of Healing.