

## Policies of the Diocese of Kansas City ~ St. Joseph Policy # 120.42

### Pastoral Care and Anointing of the Sick

Approved By: Most Reverend James V. Johnston, DD

Effective: November 25, 2024

- *Pastoral Care of the Sick and the Rites of Anointing and Viaticum* (PCS) are governed by the norms found in the 1983 edition of that ritual book. Familiarity with the Introductions provided in the ritual book is highly commended.
- Texts in the ritual book which parallel those in the *Roman Missal*, such as the response to the greeting, “and also with you,” may be updated to match the current translation in the *Roman Missal* (“and with your spirit”). The acclamation at the end of a Scripture reading may similarly be updated (“The Word [or Gospel] of the Lord”, omitting “This is”).

#### I. Visits to the Sick

- Ministry to the sick is to be seen as an essential, consistent ministry in every parish.
- When a number of sick parishioners are confined to their homes or institutions and need to avail themselves of the Eucharist on a regular basis, deacons and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion<sup>1</sup> may be delegated by the pastor for this purpose so that all the sick in the parish may receive Holy Communion.
- When scheduling visits to the sick in which deacons and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion will assist, the pastor should arrange that he or another priest visit all the sick at regular intervals to afford them the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation and, if necessary, the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick.
- Only those who have been baptized can receive an anointing.

#### II. Communion to the Sick<sup>2</sup>

- It is the responsibility of the Pastor to ensure that the sick and aged are given every opportunity to receive Holy Communion frequently (cf., canons 213; 529 §1). If possible, provision should be made to celebrate Mass in the homes of the sick, with their families and friends gathered around them. The Ordinary determines the conditions and requirements for such celebrations (PCS, 77).
- The sick may receive Holy Communion at any hour (PCS, 72). The elderly, the infirm, and those who care for them can receive the Holy Communion even if they have eaten something within the preceding hour (canon 919, §3).
- To give recognition to the dignity of the sacrament and to stir up joy at the coming of the Lord, it is well to observe a period of silence and recollection. It is a sufficient sign of devotion and respect on the part of the sick if they direct their mind for a brief period to this great mystery.

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<sup>1</sup> The Office of Divine Worship regularly offer training for ministers to the sick and homebound.

<sup>2</sup> See PCS Chapter 3, Nos. 71-96.

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- In taking the Blessed Sacrament to the sick, hosts and/or the Precious Blood should be carried in appropriate vessels. For hosts, a pyx or small ciborium is appropriate; a purificator, tissue, purse, or bag is not appropriate. For the Precious Blood, a sealed, non-porous, impermeable vessel is appropriate; a small chalice may be used if it can be sealed to prevent spilling. The Blessed Sacrament is to be carried with the utmost reverence. Care should be taken that hosts not consumed by the sick are immediately consumed by the minister or immediately returned to the tabernacle; any Precious Blood not consumed by the sick is to be immediately consumed by the minister. The Blessed Sacrament is not to be left in any other place such as one's car, purse, or bag.
- Sick people unable to receive the species of bread may receive under the species of wine alone (PCS, 74). Transporting the Precious Blood requires special care. An appropriate, leak-proof container worthy of this purpose is to be used.
- Those who live with or care for the sick should be instructed to make proper preparations for a reverent reception of Holy Communion. A table should be prepared and covered with an appropriate cloth upon which the Blessed Sacrament can be placed. One or two lighted candles and holy water should also be placed on the table. Sometimes it may be best for the minister to carry these provisions for the rite, so as to instruct by example. These preparations may not be possible in a hospital or nursing home, particularly when a number of patients or residents will be receiving Holy Communion (PCS, 78-79). In this case, the minister may be accompanied by a person carrying a candle (PCS, 92).
- After placing a host in the mouth of the sick person, if the person rejects the host, the minister returns the host to the church, dissolves it in water, and pours it into the sacarium.
- If hosts remain, the minister may consume them at the last visit, or, if they are many, return them to the tabernacle at church.
- As soon as the pyx is empty, the minister purifies the vessel, pouring water into it, swallowing the water, and wiping the pyx with a purificator. A vessel with the Precious Blood is similarly purified.
- When the distribution of Holy Communion in a hospital or nursing home takes place on a regular basis, parish volunteers can be most helpful in preparing the sick for Holy Communion prior to the arrival of the priest, deacon or extraordinary minister.
  - They should ensure that practical preparations are provided, such as seeing that the patient or resident is awake and, if possible, alert, and that the person is in the room or place where the minister can expect to find him or her.
  - It is especially helpful if the volunteers can pray with the person in anticipation of the visit by the one who brings Holy Communion.
  - When possible, Holy Communion should be celebrated in the context of a Liturgy of the Word. When this is not possible, such as in hospitals, a shorter Communion rite is provided. "If it is convenient, however, the minister may add elements from the rite for ordinary circumstances, for example, a Scripture reading" (PCS, 78).

### III. Anointing of the Sick

#### Anointing

- The ritual Mass for the Conferral of the Anointing of the Sick is prohibited “on Sundays of Advent, Lent, and Easter, on Solemnities, on the days within the Octave of Easter, on the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed (All Souls’ Day), on Ash Wednesday, and during Holy Week” (GIRM 372; see also PCS, 134).
- The ritual Mass is silent about the use of music to accompany the laying on of hands and the anointing (140-141); however, if the number of those to be anointed is sufficiently large and these two parts of the ceremony take some time, instrumental or sung music may accompany these moments of the rite. Alternatively, an acclamation may be sung after the anointing.
- Families and friends are encouraged to participate in the anointing of the sick in order to contribute their prayers and derive comfort from the Church’s care for those they love. “It will be especially helpful if the sick person, the priest, and the family become accustomed to praying together” (PCS, 100). Encouragement from the priest should be given to family members to offer prayers during the celebration of the Sacrament, including readings and intercessions.
- “The priest should ensure that the abuse of delaying the reception of the sacrament does not occur, and that the celebration takes place while the sick person is capable of active participation” (PCS, 99). Education of the People of God should be promoted to encourage those who are seriously sick, approaching surgery or of a certain age to celebrate the sacrament.
- “In the case of a person who is chronically ill, or elderly and in a weakened condition, the sacrament of anointing may be repeated when in the pastoral judgment of the priest the condition of the sick person warrants the repetition of the sacrament” (PCS, 102). The repetition of the sacrament, especially for those confined to home or nursing facilities should be done on a regular basis, both because of their frail condition and the reaching out of the community of faith through the celebration of the sacrament.
- “If the anointing is to be an effective sacramental symbol, there should be a generous use of oil so that it will be seen and felt by the sick person as a sign of the Spirit’s healing and strengthening presence. For the same reason, it is not desirable to wipe off the oil after the anointing” (PCS, 107). The priest should ensure that there is sufficient oil in stocks to provide for its generous use in the sacrament. If he has no oil, he may bless what he needs for an anointing within the ceremony on that single occasion with oil derived from plants, such as olive oil. He may restock his supply from oil that the bishop blessed at the Chrism Mass by contacting the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception.
- “Only those whose health is seriously impaired by sickness or old age are proper subjects for the sacrament” (PCS, 108). Education of the parishioners regarding the qualities desired for the celebration of the sacrament should be periodically done in parishes or institutions to ensure proper understanding of who may celebrate the sacrament.
- “If the sick person wishes to celebrate the sacrament of penance, it is preferable that the priest make himself available for this during a previous visit” (PCS, 113). It is

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important not to confuse the sacrament of the Sick and the sacrament of Penance. However, this may not be possible or practical, and the rite provides for occasions when both sacraments are celebrated at the same occasion.

- “The circumstances of an emergency room or casualty ward of a hospital may make the proper celebration of the sacrament difficult. If the condition of the sick person does not make anointing urgent, the priest may find it better to wait for a more appropriate time to celebrate the sacrament” (PCS, 152). Pastoral sensitivity to the needs of the patient and his/her family should be uppermost in the mind of the priest as he approaches an emergency room or casualty ward.
- Those who have died are not eligible for the sacrament of the sick. In case of doubt, the priest may anoint using the regular formula. There is no conditional formula for anointing (e.g., “If you are still alive....”)

### Anointing of Children

- Children with serious illness can be anointed if they have sufficient use of reason to be strengthened by the sacrament (canon 1004).
- Small children without sufficient use of reason are not considered as candidates for the Sacrament of Anointing. Rather, the priest should use the prayers, readings and blessings for sick children (PCS, 62-70).
- However, if there is any doubt as to whether a seriously ill child has sufficient use of reason, every benefit of the doubt is to be afforded and the child should be anointed (canon 1005). Otherwise, administering the sacrament to an infant would be valid but illicit and is to be avoided.
- Those who once had the use of reason but have subsequently lost their mental faculties due to senility, unconsciousness, mental illness or some other reason should be anointed (canon 1006).

## IV. Viaticum

- The celebration of viaticum within Mass no longer requires permission of the Ordinary (PCS, 164, emended 1984).
- Any priest or deacon may administer viaticum; in their absence a deputed communion minister may do so (PCS, 29).
- A priest grants the apostolic pardon (plenary indulgence) after the Sacrament of Penance or the Penitential Act (PCS, 201). “If a priest is unavailable, Holy Mother Church benevolently grants to the Christian faithful, who are duly disposed, a *plenary indulgence* to be acquired at the point of death, provided that they have been in the habit of reciting some prayers during their lifetime; in such a case the Church supplies for the three conditions ordinarily required for a plenary indulgence” (*Manual of Indulgences*, Washington DC: USCCB, 1999, 12 §2).

## V. Pastoral Care of the Dying

- Catholics in danger of death are to be nourished with Holy Communion under the form of Viaticum (canon 921, §1). Those caring for others are to be “zealous and vigilant that the sick are nourished by Viaticum while fully conscious” (canon 922).

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- The Commendation of the Dying (PCS, 212-222) may be administered by any priest, deacon or layperson.
- The Prayers for the Dead (PCS, 223-231) may be offered by any priest, deacon or layperson.
- Under the Rites for Exceptional Circumstances, the Continuous Rite of Penance, Anointing, and Viaticum (PCS, 232-258) are to be led by a priest especially when the person in danger has not been recently anointed. The priest uses the Rite for Emergencies (PCS, 259-274) when time is of the essence. If the person in danger of death has not been baptized, anyone may administer the sacrament; a priest also administers confirmation if time allows (PCS, 275-296). The person who administers sacraments must notify the local parish to enter a record of the place, date, minister and godparents.

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