

INTRODUCTION

Christ teaches us to be so loving care upon those who are sick. He builds us do all we can to alleviate the bodily suffering and also to attend to the spiritual needs of the sick and dying. In providing for the body, we may not neglect the soul. In addition to calling in nurse and physician, we must call in the best of physicians Jesus Christ. Himself. He comes to the sick with Grace in the sacrament of penance and **Extreme Unction** shine and gives his very body and blood in **Holy Communion**.

We should welcome the priest who brings these sacraments as we would welcome Christ. It is as if Jesus were to enter the sick room and say: "My friends, I am here to console and comfort this poor sick man; I will heal the ills of his soul. And if need be, even those of his body. I will make him content and happy. " How vain and foolish is the fear of those who delay in calling the priest for their sick friends and relatives!

It is a fear of asking Christ to come and solace them. It is not only a vain fear, but it is sinful fear, for a grave obligation rests upon us to receive the sacraments in danger of death, especially if we be in Mortal Sin. And this obligation is shared by those attending this sick. Let us call the priest and in due time!

CALLING THE PRIEST

If the case is very urgent, call the nearest priest. Otherwise call the pastor or assistant pastor. If possible, communicate in-person, otherwise telephone. Do not send a child unless no one else is available. Give the priest the full and exact name, address, age, and condition of the sick person (report whether conscious and/or subject to vomiting). Be sure to mention the fact if he has been attended by a priest in the sickness and state when he last received the sacraments.

In case of sudden death, the priest should be called immediately for no one knows just when the soul leaves the body. As long as there is hope that it is still present, **Extreme Unction** may be administered conditionally. If the soul be still present the sacrament may take effect. If the man is really dead, then by intention of the priest the sacrament is not conferred. The priest Macon for the sacraments even though the stricken person is pronounced dead by the physician or has appeared to be dead for a whole hour period, and in some cases even after two hours.

Do not call the priest needlessly. Avoid calling during the hours for concessions or at night or on Sundays unless there a serious reason for doing so. However, if there is real danger do not delay a single moment. The physician will be able to judge when there is danger of death. Calling the priest at night someone preferably a man, should call for in accompany the priest, especially if lonely or suspicious places must be passed. This will assure safety for the priest and for Blessed Sacrament. The person accompanying the priest should avoid speaking unless the priest should speak first or special reasons for conversation.

CONFESSION

Penance removes mortal sin and brings peace to the soul by removing depressing dread of divine judgment. The sinner becomes a child of God and is ready to accept all trials and sufferings from the hands of his Heavenly Father. A **General Confession** is advisable before death, especially if past confessions are doubtful. Persons who constantly worry about their past will be told by their confessor how to act in this manner.

HOLY COMMUNION

Willfully to neglect receiving capital **Holy Communion** before death is a mortal sin. In fact, if a dying person has received the Blessed Sacrament the day previous, he still must receive **Holy Viaticum**, as holy communion is called when given to those in danger of death.

Viaticum may be received frequently, even daily as long as the danger continues. There is no obligation to be fasting after midnight. The sick person may eat or drink anything whatsoever even though she could readily keep the fast. Sick persons not in danger of death do not receive **Holy Communion** as **Viaticum**; they are obliged to keep the fast from midnight previous to receiving.

There is one exception: all those who have been seriously though not dangerously ill for a month, and for whom there is no hope of immediate recovery, may receive **Holy Communion** twice a week without keeping the fast if fasting is very difficult for them. I may take solid or liquid medicine and drink any drink any liquid food but no solid food. There is no grave obligation to keep from eating and drinking after communion, but reverence for the Blessed Sacrament requires that they abstain for a short time unless there be a good reason to the contrary. In the case of the sick such reason is usually present, hence this point should occasion no worry.

If the sick person cannot easily swallow the sacred host, the priest may give him a very small particle; or the host may be given with a little water; or water may be given immediately after he has received. When water is this taken, even we're obliged to keep the fast from midnight need not worry if a little water should be swallowed before the sacred host.

The physician should be consulted in regard to the danger of vomiting. If there is no great danger that the patient will vomit shortly after communicating, especially if he has not done so for several hours then he may receive **Holy Communion**. If however, the patient should vomit after he has received **Holy Communion** and even if there is no evidence of the secret species entire or in part, the whole should be burned. If the host can be discerned, then it should be reverently removed and given to the priest.

EXTREME UNCTION

In the list of sacraments conferred by anointing **Extreme Unction** is the last. It is likewise the anointing for the last moments of life. Hence, we call it the last anointing or **Extreme Unction**. It is not extreme in the sense that we must be in extreme danger to receive it, nor that once we have received it we have no chance of recovery. This sacrament is intended by Christ as a health restorer for the soul; it frees from venial sin, increases sanctifying grace, removes the remains of weakness and sin in the soul, removes the temporal punishment due to offenses, gives the soul strength and courage to face the last Temptations in the death struggle, and enter eternity ready for heaven. In some cases it even removes mortal sin as we shall explain.

Any Catholic who is dangerously sick, old people in danger of death though not violently ill, those who have met with serious accident, those about to undergo an operation that places them in danger of death, women in precarious condition on account of childbirth, all these may and must receive **Extreme Unction** even though death is not certain or even if there is greater probability in favor of recovery. **Extreme Unction** must be received in the state of grace so confession or at least perfect contrition must precede it. However, if anyone is suddenly overtaken by sickness and is unconscious when the priest arrives, he may still receive the sacrament. In such a case the absolution of the priest is of doubtful value because there has been no confession, but **Extreme Unction** certainly removes all mortal sin, and confers sanctifying grace provided the sick person has at least *imperfect contrition* in his heart. In such cases it gives much greater certainty of freeing from sin than the absolution of the priest. If the sick person though conscious when receiving the sacrament, has some *unforgiven mortal sin* on his conscience of which he is ignorant, it will be remitted. He need have no more than *imperfect contrition*.

In order that the sacrament have its fullest effect it must be received in time so that the patient can himself, by Acts of Faith, Hope, Love and Contrition cooperate with the graces conferred. Then there is greater reason to hope for bodily recovery and if deaths should follow, the agony will be more easily endured, purgatory will be shorter and a more glorious crown in heaven will be assured. How often may extreme unction be received? Once in the same sickness. If the sick person has successfully gone through one crisis and is out of danger and again relapses, though it be from the same sickness he may receive at the sacrament again. Let the priest judge the situation.

LAST BLESSING AND INDULGENCES

The priest who administers the sacraments to the dying will usually give the **Last Blessing**, which carries with it a Plenary Indulgence. A **Plenary Indulgence** is the complete remission of punishment due to sins already forgiven. After gaining such an indulgence we are truly ready for immediate admission to the blessed vision of God. Of course, all of our sins must first be sacramentally forgiven and all affection for sin removed. We have ample means to affect this by receiving very devoutly the **Sacrament of Penance** and **Holy Communion**. The Plenary Indulgence that is given by the Last Blessing has one advantage over all the others, namely it takes effect not when the blessing is given, but in the very last moment of life.

The following gain a plenary Indulgence at the hour of death:

1. All who in life used the beautiful greeting **“Praise be Jesus Christ”** or the response **“Forever Amen”** as well as those who frequently invoked the name of **Jesus** provided they repeat His name in the hour of death with their lips or if in their hearts.
2. Those who frequently in life made use of the prayer **“Angel of God my Guardian Dear...”** if they die well prepared:

Angel of God my guardian dear, to whom God's love commits me here, ever this day be at my side, to light, to guard, to rule, to guide. Amen.

3. Members of certain confraternities such as the scapular, The Precious Blood, etc.
4. Those who frequently in life made **Acts of Faith, Hope, Love:**

ACT OF FAITH

O my God! I firmly believe that Thou art one God in three Divine Persons, Father, Son and Holy Ghost; I believe that Thy Divine Son became man, and died for our sins, and that he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe these and all the truths which the Holy Catholic Church teaches, because Thou hast revealed them, Who canst neither deceive nor be deceived. Amen.

ACT OF HOPE

O my God! Relying on Thy almighty power and infinite mercy and promises, I hope to obtain pardon of my sins, the help of Thy grace, and life everlasting, through the merits of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Redeemer. Amen.

ACT OF CHARITY

O my God! I love Thee above all things, with my whole heart and soul, because Thou art all good and worthy of all love. I love my neighbor as myself for love of Thee. I forgive all who have injured me and ask pardon of all whom I have injured. Amen

5. All who once in their life recited the **Prayer of Resignation:**

My Lord God, even now resignedly and willingly, I accept at Thy hand, with all its anxieties, pains and sufferings, whatever kind of death it shall please Thee to be mine. Amen.

6. All those who possess an article crucifix metal etc. to which the **Apostolic Blessing** has been attached. This article must be kept in the room of the sick person and remain there until his death. It need not be held nor kissed. It need not be his own property, nor is the indulgence lost after his death, and it may be used by many persons without being re-Blessed, unless it is sold.

We can gain for ourselves only one **Plenary Indulgence** but since we are never sure that we have been so fortunate as to have gained it, we should try to gain as many as possible. If we gain more than one fully, we can do a great work of mercy for the souls in purgatory. Happy the thought for the sick person, *“I can help those who may be my companions in purgatory.”*

THE APOSTOLIC PARDON

INTRODUCTION

The profundity of the divine mercy that God has for men is magnificently demonstrated in the conferring to Saint Peter and his successors, the Keys over the spiritual treasury of the Church, so that by their word the faithful can obtain from the spiritual treasury, the application of the sufferings of Christ to the atonement for the temporal punishment due to their sin; and hence be granted a full pardon for having violated divine justice.

At the time of death, one is at the doorstep of a true reckoning for one's life. What great compassion God has in giving the Church the power to wipe away all of the restitution one must pay back to him. This is called an **“Apostolic Pardon”** or an **“Apostolic Blessing.”**

PAPAL AUTHORITY

Pope Innocent IV in his Bull, *Pia Mater* extended the faculty all priests to give a benediction with a **plenary indulgence** to the sick, called *“In Articulo Mortis - The Moment of Death.”*

CONDITIONS

This indulgence is gained only at the moment of death. The circumstances in which the benediction is to be given are the same as with giving **Extreme Unction** and is customary to be given right afterwards. In order to gain the fruit of the indulgence, the following conditions of disposition must be held by the sick person:

1. Sorrow for their sins.
2. Sentiments of fervent love of God.
3. Perfect resignation to His Holy Will in accepting death by His hand, in punishment for their sins.

FORMS

The Apostolic Blessing has two forms in the in the Ordinary Form for the Anointing of the Sick:

- **Form A:**
“Through the holy mysteries of our redemption, may Almighty God release you from all punishments in this life and in the life to come. May he open to you the gates of paradise and welcome you to everlasting joy. Amen.”
- **Form B:**
“By the Faculty which the Apostolic See has given me, I grant you a full pardon and the remission of all your sins, in the Name of the Father ✠, and of the Son ✠, and of the Holy Spirit ✠. Amen.”

PERFECT CONTRITION

Sorrow for sin is a conversion from the sin into which we have fallen into God, whom we have offended. If we turn to God because we fear His justice, which will punish us, deprive us of heaven, and condemn us to hell; or because of the great ugliness of sin in the eyes of God, we have only *Imperfect Contrition*. If

we love God above all things for His own great goodness and are sorry for having offended Him, we have *Perfect Contrition*.

The very fear of Hell may help us to make an act of **Perfect Contrition** by awakening in us the desire of freeing ourselves from sin. This fear may remain while we make the act of Perfect Contrition, but even greater than our fear of hell must be our love for the all-good God, whom we have offended. Thus, with the grace of God, Perfect Contrition becomes easy.

PREPARING THE SICK ROOM FOR THE SACRAMENTS

The sick-room out to be the best room we have. When the sacraments are to be administered, it should be clean and well ventilated; all unnecessary things such as dishes, medicines, etc. should be removed. No animals are to be allowed in the room. A change of linens before the sacraments are administered is recommended. The patient should be washed and combed and the parts to be anointed should be clean and presentable. Since the house becomes the dwelling place of our Lord in the **Holy Eucharist**, all who are present are expected to show by their conduct the spirit of Christian faith. Their clothes must be neat and clean with clothing covering the body and recommended that veils are worn by women. Also, all people present during the administration of the sacraments, especially **Holy Communion** must conduct themselves as if in Church. It is proper to genuflect when passing the Blessed Sacrament such as when entering or leaving the room where Our Lord is.

If the sick person wishes to go to **Confession**, place a chair at the head of the bed facing the foot so that the confessor will not be obliged to turn away in order to avoid looking the patient in the face. Place a table, so that the patient can see it. The table should be covered with a **white cloth** and free from anything that is not necessary for the administration of the sacraments. Make these preparations BEFORE the priest arrives and give the patient ample quiet time alone to prepare himself for the reception of the sacraments.

Items To Place on the Sick-Room Table:

1. A White Cloth covering the table.
2. Crucifix.
3. Two Candlesticks with Beeswax Candles and a lighter or matches.
4. Finger bowl with Water.
5. Holy Water bottle.
6. Spoon, Napkin, small towel.
7. Saucer with small balls of cotton.
8. Salt
9. Clean Plate.

Whoever is managing the affairs of the house, or one appointed by him should lead in prayer and help the priest when he administers **Extreme Unction**. The others assist by joining in prayer, avoiding noisy talk or whispering. This displays true Christian charity for the sick person.

As the priest approaches the house someone should light the candles. A disturbance is caused by waiting until the priest is in the room before the candles are lit. It would be worse still if after the priest arrives, someone is obliged to hunt for matches or other articles needed for the administration of the sacraments.

When the priest is at the door someone should meet him with a lighted candle. Other people should be in the room kneeling and praying. No one should speak to the priest unless strictly necessary. They should remain kneeling until he bids them to retire. They remain out during the patient's confession until given a sign by the priest to return to the room. During this time, it is very advisable to kneel and pray for the patient. While in the sick room, all should follow the priest in prayer. Someone should be available to help with the removal and replacement of bed clothing, re-positioning the patient's head if needed, etc. After the priest leaves, if there are any remaining cotton balls with Holy Oil, they should be burned to prevent desecration.

HELP IN THE ABSENCE OF A PRIEST

It often happens that the priest cannot be called in time. In such a case be calm and do not show anxiety or agitation. Be concerned with the only thing that matters, namely the eternal salvation of the sick person. Light the candles, give the dying person a crucifix to kiss and bid him have confidence in Jesus, who died in order to save us; and in his blood, which cries powerfully to heaven for mercy.

Sprinkle the bed and the sick person with holy water. Then make with him **Acts of Faith, Hope, Love, Contrition and Resignation to God's Will**. If he can speak let him repeat after you, if he cannot get him to follow the words in his heart. Let the acts be short, frequently repeat the name of **Jesus**. Speak slowly and clearly. As death approaches speak louder. Continue even after consciousness seems lost for the sense of hearing may be functioning even after the other senses cease to do so.

Ask those present to pray. Say the **Prayers for the Dying**; and after the beloved one has passed away say the appropriate **Prayers for the Deceased**. Even if the dying person has led a careless life, we ought to help him make acts of perfect contrition. Perfect contrition is the golden key that opens the "Palace of eternity." We need not fear that even the most ignorant will not be able to make an active perfect contrition. An earnest look at the crucifix, a devout recitation of the **Our Father, My Jesus Mercy** or the simple name of **Jesus**, with the grace of God, may contain perfect contrition.

WHAT TO DO FOR THE DYING NON-CATHOLIC

Those who are not Catholics should also be helped in their last moments. If they are unbaptized and are willing to believe all that the church teaches, we must baptize them. If it is not sure if they have been properly baptized, then we baptize them conditionally. If the person is well disposed to getting baptized, but there is reason to fear that he does not want to join the Church or if mentioning the Catholic Church will only disturb him and thus endanger the work of saving his soul, we may proceed in the following manner:

1. Ask him if he believes in Jesus, who is God and came to save us by His death on the cross.
2. Ask him if he believes in the three Divine Persons, Father, Son and Holy Ghost.
3. Ask him if he is sorry for offending God.
4. Ask him to make an **Act of Love** for Jesus:

My Jesus, I love You because You are all good; I am Sorry to have hurt and offended You by sin. My Jesus, help me."

A **Prayer Card** with everything needed to assist a **Non-Catholic** to die in a state of Perfect Contrition can be found [Here](#).

HOW TO BAPTIZE IN AN EMERGENCY

To baptize we take ordinary water (does not need to be blessed holy water), and pour it so that it flows on the head of the person, saying at the same time:

*"[Person's name], I baptize you in the name of the **Father** ✠, and of the **Son** ✠, and of the **Holy Ghost** ✠."*

As you recite the words, you pour the water. You must pour the water so that it touches the skin of the person being baptized. It is well to remember that everyone (children and adults) who have reached the age of reason, need to be baptized before death.

If you have reason to think that the person may have been baptized but are not certain, or if you do not know if their baptism was properly conferred, then you may baptize them conditionally saying:

*"[Person's name], IF you are NOT baptized, I baptize you in the name of the **Father** ✠, and of the **Son** ✠, and of the **Holy Ghost** ✠."*

CONCLUSION

To be warned by sickness that death is approaching is a great grace, for it is a terrible thing to go to eternity unprepared!
