



ARCHDIOCESE OF ST. LOUIS
Office of Sacred Worship

LITURGY NOTES

MY EXPERIENCE WITH THE SACRAMENT OF THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK

By: Joe and Kathy Gallagher, Parishioners at Saint Gabriel the Archangel

The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is offered at the Basilica of Saint Louis, King of France (Old Cathedral), following the 7:00 a.m. Mass on the first Saturday of each month for those who seek its benefits.

My wife and I were first invited to receive this sacrament by fellow parishioner Joanne Buchholz while attending Mass at the Old Cathedral. At the time, I was participating in the Five First Saturday Devotions to the Blessed Virgin Mary, always seeking new ways to enter more deeply into the life of grace through the Church's sacraments. We gratefully accepted her invitation.

That moment proved providential, coming shortly before I received a diagnosis of pancreatic cancer. During the rite, Father Smith proclaimed the beautiful passage from the Letter of James, which reminds us that *"if there are any among you who are sick, let them send for the priests of the Church, and let the priests pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and if they have committed any sins, their sins will be forgiven."*

These words offer deep comfort and hope—speaking not only of physical healing, but also of the spiritual strength and peace that come from God's grace.

I am deeply consoled to know that this sacrament is a gift of divine mercy, instituted by Christ Himself, to bring healing, forgiveness, and peace to those who are suffering. I encourage anyone in need of physical, emotional, or spiritual healing to prayerfully consider receiving this often-overlooked sacrament. It is a powerful encounter with God's love and a profound way to draw closer to Christ through His Church.

May the Lord bless you and your loved ones with His healing grace and enduring peace.



A HISTORY OF THE SACRAMENT OF THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK

By: Father Nicholas Smith, Director of the Office of Sacred Worship

The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick has its origins deep in the heart of Sacred Scripture and has evolved over centuries in response to both pastoral needs and theological understanding.

Its biblical roots are most clearly seen in the Letter of James (5:14–15), where we read:

“Is anyone among you sick? He should summon the presbyters of the Church, and they should pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord....”

This passage provides a vivid image of the early Church’s care for the sick, emphasizing both spiritual and physical healing, united through prayer, community, and the anointing with oil. It is a sign of God’s compassionate presence and the Church’s role as a healing body.

In the Gospels, we see Jesus Himself healing the sick—not only curing physical ailments, but also healing souls, forgiving sins, and restoring people to the community of faith. These healings were signs of the Kingdom of God and foreshadowed the Church’s future sacramental ministry.

In the first centuries of Christianity, the faithful took this call to healing seriously. Christians regularly gathered to pray over the sick, using blessed oil and the laying on of hands, following the pattern in James. At this stage, the rite was not seen as a formal “sacrament” in the way we now understand it, but as a natural and necessary part of the Christian life and community. The oil was often blessed by a bishop and administered by presbyters (priests).

However, by the Middle Ages (6th–15th centuries), the practice began to shift. As theological focus grew more centered on death and the afterlife, the anointing of the sick came to be reserved primarily for those nearing death. The sacrament became known as “Extreme Unction,” meaning the “last anointing.” It was often administered alongside Confession and the Eucharist (called Viaticum, or “food for the journey”), forming a kind of “last rites” to prepare the soul for death. The emphasis was less on healing and more on spiritual preparation for passing from this life.

In the 16th century, during the turmoil of the Protestant Reformation, the Council of Trent (1545–1563) reaffirmed that the Anointing of the Sick was indeed a true sacrament instituted by Christ, not merely a human tradition. The Council highlighted its spiritual power—especially the forgiveness of sins, spiritual strength, and comfort in suffering—even as it continued to be understood primarily as a preparation for death.

A major shift came with the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965). The Council sought to recover the original scriptural and communal understanding of the sacrament. No longer limited to those on the brink of death, the sacrament was renamed Anointing of the Sick, reflecting a broader and more hopeful purpose. Vatican II taught that it is meant for anyone seriously ill, undergoing major surgery, or weakened by age—not only the dying. It restored the communal and pastoral dimension that had marked the early Church, bringing the sacrament back to its roots in James 5.

Today, the Anointing of the Sick is celebrated with deep reverence and pastoral care. It may be received multiple times throughout a person’s life—whenever a serious illness arises. The rite includes:

The laying on of hands,
Prayers of faith, and
Anointing with the Oil of the Sick on the forehead and hands.

When appropriate, it is also accompanied by the Sacrament of Reconciliation and Holy

Communion.

This sacrament continues to offer not only hope of physical healing, but also peace of soul, courage in suffering, forgiveness of sins, and deep union with the Passion of Christ. It is a sacrament of life—not only in the final moments—but in every moment when we are in need of the healing and strengthening grace of God.



A REFLECTION ON THE SACRAMENT OF THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK
By: Father Phil Krahman, Priest of the Archdiocese of St. Louis

I remember walking into a skilled nursing facility, and I am aware of the privilege to enter the sacred space of the sick and dying.

One day I was there to anoint one of my priestly brothers as he had been struggling and was no longer able to respond. I prayed with him and then said the Our Father. During the Our Father, the priest mouthed the words silently as I said the prayer. Even before death or a time of unresponsiveness, I always presume that they can still feel and hear, there are many instances that I have experienced patients who wake up from a coma in the ICU, and they can sometimes recall some of the discussion in the ICU

As priests, we have a special role as we bring prayer and the sacramental ministry to the sick. And we represent the Church community. If family is available, we invite the loved ones around the patient's bed or chair as we pray together. Something special takes place and it is important to the sick and dying and the family that as priests we are present. A silent presence can be powerful, demonstrating that the community is with them in their time of need and will be with them after the loved one dies. The anointing, whether it is at a skilled facility, a hospital, personal home or in hospice, brings much comfort to the sick, the dying and their family. If possible, reconciliation is a beautiful component of the anointing, along with an Apostolic Pardon. I have found staff members to be helpful. Although they are busy with patient care they can be a resource if you need any assistance. Some staff members may even participate in the prayer.

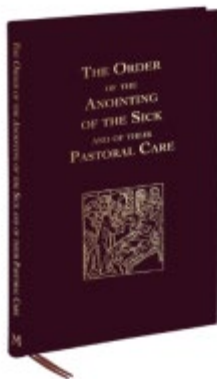
Death at times can take months to only a matter of hours, and you never know when the time will be. As death gets closer, as we pray together with the dying and loved ones, there is a strong presence of Jesus and others in the room that you cannot see, yet is profound.

A highly spiritual moment takes place through prayer, laying of hands, and oil for anointing. Also, a reverent and spiritual moment takes place through the gift of Viaticum, the Eucharist, which is food for the road and the journey from here to the afterlife.

If someone dies before you arrive, it is still beautiful to pray with the family over the body. The ritual of prayers of farewell supports the healing reality of the death and hope in Christ's salvation.

As a priest, it is a most humbling, powerful, and spiritual experience. It is a privilege to minister at this time in a person's life and their family's lives as well.

About the Author: Fr Phil Krahman is a priest of the Archdiocese of St. Louis with over 20 years' experience as a hospital chaplain, primarily at Mercy Hospital in Creve Coeur, and ten years in ministry to senior priests of the archdiocese.



A decree dated November 30, 2024, from the Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, confirmed the English translation of the *Order of the Anointing of the Sick and of their Pastoral Care* and the Spanish translation of the *Ritual de la Unción de los enfermos y de su atención pastoral* for liturgical use in the United States. Both the decrees and confirmed texts were received by the USCCB in December.

Following an editorial review period by the Secretariat of Divine Worship, Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, president of the USCCB, issued decrees of promulgation on January 23, 2025, establishing the timeline for implementation.

Please Note: The new Anointing rites may be used beginning February 11, 2026, the memorial of Our Lady of Lourdes and the annual World Day of the Sick. The new rites MUST BE USED beginning Easter Sunday, April 5, 2026.

The new ritual book includes:

- The Visitation and Communion to the Sick
- The Order of the Anointing of the Sick
- Viaticum
- The Order of Offering the Sacraments to a Sick Person Who Is in Imminent Danger of Death
- Confirmation in Danger of Death
- The Order of the Commendation of the Dying
- Various Texts to Be Used in the Rites for the Sick
- Model Rites for the Visitation of the Sick
- Shorter Order of Adult Initiation to Be Used in Near Danger of Death or at the Point of Death
- Prayers after Death
- The Emergency Rite of Penance, Viaticum, and Anointing

As per the USCCB, the revised ritual edition may ship as of January 2026.

To order: If you would like to order the new Anointing rites at a discount, please use the order form below and follow the directions for submitting payment.

Directions for submitting payment: Please submit payment at the time of submitting your order. For parishes, you can make an internal ACH transfer if convenient : send ACH transfer requests to ach@archstl.org. Or checks can be made to the Office of Sacred Worship and should be mailed to the following address, please do not mail checks directly to our office.

Archdiocese of St. Louis
Mail Stop 100700
PO Box 953745
St. Louis, Missouri 63195-3745

Please submit a copy of the full order to worship@archstl.org. Please contact the Office of Sacred Worship with any questions at 314-792-7231 or worship@archstl.org.

ORDER FORM

The Church’s care for the sick and homebound is a beautiful expression of Christ’s compassion and presence. Through the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick and the regular reception of Holy Communion, those who suffer in body, mind, or spirit are united more closely to the healing love of Jesus and to the whole community of faith. These ministries remind us that no member of the Body of Christ is ever forgotten or alone.

The importance of bringing Holy Communion to those unable to attend Mass cannot be understated. Below are current guidelines from the Office of Sacred Worship to support this vital ministry. These norms are intended to help ensure reverence for the Eucharist and deep pastoral care for those who receive the Lord in their homes, hospitals, and care facilities.

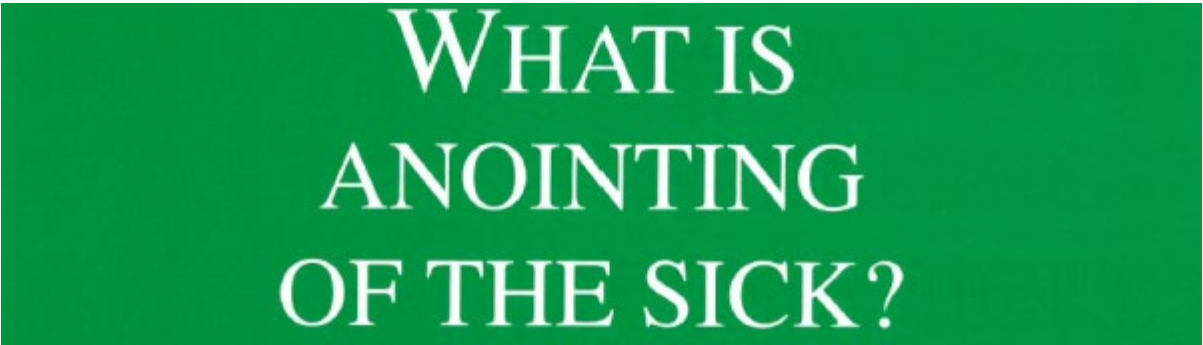
[VIEW THE GUIDELINES HERE - ENGLISH](#)

[VIEW THE GUIDELINES HERE - SPANISH](#)



Did you know?

The Office of Sacred Worship offers several publications including brochures on Anointing of the Sick and Viaticum. The brochure on the Anointing of the Sick offers information about the history of the Sacrament as well as proper practice guidelines. The Viaticum brochure goes through a brief synopsis of the Anointing of the Sick, when Viaticum is celebrated, and how it differs from usual reception of Holy Communion. If you or your parish is interested in purchasing copies, please reach out to Maggie Dapron (maggiedapron@archstl.org) for more information!



¿QUÉ ES LA UNCION DE LOS ENFERMOS?

NEWS



**The Relics of St. Thérèse of Lisieux
are Coming to St. Louis!**

The Little Flower is coming to St. Louis, Missouri, November 10th - November 13th. For more information on how you can venerate the Relics, click [HERE](#). You may also obtain the Jubilee Indulgence granted by the Holy Father. The Chapel of the Carmel of St. Joseph has been designated an official Pilgrimage Site for the 2025 Jubilee Year of Hope. For details on how to obtain the indulgence, click [HERE](#).

THE OFFICE OF SACRED
WORSHIP PRESENTS:

NOW AND AT THE HOUR OF OUR DEATH:
*A GUIDE TO NAVIGATING END OF
LIFE DECISIONS AS A CATHOLIC.*

**MARCH
27
2026**

CARDINAL RIGALI CENTER

MORE INFORMATION TO COME...

**SAVE
THE
DATE**

MUSIC

Archdiocesan Musicians Mass & Festival Choir

On behalf of the Cathedral Basilica and the Archdiocese of Saint Louis, we are pleased to invite you and your parish adult choir, youth choir (grades 4-12), and school choir members to participate in a **Festival Choir** for the celebration of **St. Cecilia, Patroness of Musicians**. This special Mass is to honor all musicians of the Archdiocese and includes a blessing for musicians at the conclusion of the liturgy.

Event details:

- **Where:** Cathedral Basilica of St. Louis
- **When:** November 22nd, 2025 (Feast of St. Cecilia)

Itinerary:

9:30 – 11:00 AM: Youth Festival Choir Rehearsal (Gymnasium)

11:00 – 11:45 AM: Youth Choir Break for Lunch/Snack (Lunchroom/Classroom)
11:00 – 12:30 PM: Adult Festival Choir Rehearsal (Gymnasium)
11:45 – 12:30 PM: Youth and Adult Combined Festival Choir Rehearsal (Gymnasium)
12:30 – 1:00 PM: Arrival & Seating
12:45 – 1:00 PM: Prelude: provided by the Adult and Youth Festival Choirs and Archdiocesan Choir
1:00 – 2:00 PM: St. Cecilia Day Mass
2:00 – 3:00 PM: Reception with light refreshments (Boland Hall)

Important Details and FAQ

How do we sign up?

We encourage music directors to sign up their choir members via the link provided:

[**Festival Choir Sign Up Link**](#)

How do we receive the scores for the Festival Choir Pieces?

We will mail out scores before November 1st.

Do we need to learn parts in advance?

We ask that music directors allocate some time to introduce the piece to their choir members who plan to attend. Because we will teach the entire piece in rehearsal, do not expect it to be "performance ready."

Is there a dress code?

Dress in church clothes attire.

Is lunch provided?

There is no lunch provided, choristers may bring a small lunch. There is a reception with light appetizers, snacks, and drinks provided following Mass.

Do we have to RSVP if we wish to attend Mass but not participate in the festival choir?

Yes, as it helps us plan for how many will be in attendance. The sign-up form provides the opportunity to indicate if you wish to participate in the choir or simply attend Mass.

Is attendance required at the rehearsal in order to participate with the festival choir on the prelude piece?

Yes, as we only have one opportunity to rehearse as a combined ensemble it is important that all participants attend the rehearsal if they wish to sing the festival choir piece with the choir.

Music Directors please RSVP by November 1st using the link below:

[**Festival Choir Sign Up Click Here!**](#)

A survey will also be sent electronically following the event.

We hope you and your choirs will join us in lifting your voices in honor of St. Cecilia and in celebration of the gift of sacred music to our Archdiocese.

Sincerely,

The Archdiocesan Choir, Youth Choir, Cathedral Choir, and Schola Cantorum

On behalf of the Cathedral Basilica and the Archdiocese of Saint Louis

SIGN UP HERE TODAY

CHRISTIAN INITIATION



Please contact Joe Milner (JoeMilner@archstl.org) with any questions about Christian Initiation.

RECLAMATION



The Reclamation Center of the Archdiocese of Saint Louis collects, cares for, and repurposes religious and liturgical items no longer in use. It seeks to give these items new life in the church, specifically in chapels, agencies, schools, retreat centers, and with the clergy. The Reclamation Center has many items to help us in our focus of prayer and faith life. Please visit our website: <https://www.archstl.org/about/offices-and-agencies/worship-office-of-reclamation-center/>



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Office of Sacred Worship

20 Archbishop May Drive | St. Louis, MO 63119
314.792.7231 | liturgynotes@archstl.org
www.archstl.org/sacred-worship

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