

## **Topic 23: Penance and the Anointing of the Sick**

Penance is a sacrament which brings healing and salvation from sin. Over the course of history, the ministers of Christ and the Church have exercised the power to forgive sins in different ways. At the same time, in this sacrament the Church has maintained a fundamental structure which is made up of two equally essential elements: the action of the person who experiences conversion under the influence of the Holy Spirit, and the

action of God which occurs through the ministry of the Church.

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## **Penance**

“Celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation means being enfolded in a warm embrace: it is the embrace of the Father’s infinite mercy. Let us recall that beautiful, beautiful parable of the son who left his home with the money of his inheritance. He wasted all the money and then, when he had nothing left, he decided to return home, not as a son but as a servant. His heart was filled with so much guilt and shame. The surprise came when he began to speak, to ask for forgiveness, his father did not let him speak; he embraced him, he kissed him, and he began to make

merry. But I am telling you: each time we go to confession, God embraces us. God rejoices!”<sup>[1]</sup>—

Grace and new life in Christ, received through the sacraments of Christian initiation (i.e. Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist), render the faithful holy and immaculate before God (cf. Eph 1:4). The reception of these sacraments, however, does not fully restore interior harmony and order to the soul. In fact, the consequences of original sin remain. These include frailty and weakness in our human nature and the inclination to sin.

Regenerated by Baptism, enlightened by the word of God and strengthened by the saving power of Confirmation and the Eucharist, we most certainly possess the means to remain in God's love and to take on the spiritual struggle required to overcome the temptations of the Evil One (cf. 2 Pet

1:3-11). Nonetheless, the Christian remains a “wayfarer,” a pilgrim on earth, who journeys towards his heavenly homeland. Our intelligence and will are not yet definitively fixed on the fullness of beauty, truth, and love found in God. Consequently, while being a “wayfarer” on earth, the Christian is called to “travel” freely towards God, who is the origin and ultimate goal of our life. Along the path of this journey, the believer must constantly choose between accepting and rejecting God’s fatherly will. God desires our salvation, but at the same time respects the freedom He himself has given us. Hence, as a result of an improper use of this freedom, we can turn away from God’s love and fall into sin.

For the specific purpose of remitting the sins committed after Baptism, our Lord, the physician of our souls and bodies, has instituted a special

sacrament of healing and salvation from sin: the sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation (cf. *Catechism*, 1446).

According to the living Tradition of the Church and the teachings of the Magisterium, Jesus instituted the sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation primarily when, risen from the dead, He breathed the Spirit on his Apostles. He thus conferred on them his own divine power to forgive sins: “He breathed on them, and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained’” (Jn 20:22-23).<sup>[2]</sup>

This power to pardon sins has been passed on to the bishops, successors of the Apostles as shepherds of the Church. This power has also been given to priests, who are ministers of the New Covenant and collaborators

of the bishops, by virtue of the sacrament of Holy Orders. “Christ has willed that in her prayer and life and action his whole Church should be the sign and instrument of the forgiveness and reconciliation that he acquired for us at the price of his blood. But he entrusted the exercise of the power of absolution to the apostolic ministry” (*Catechism*, 1442).

## **Structure of the Sacrament of Penance**

Throughout history, the ministers of Christ and the Church have exercised the power to forgive sins in different forms, which have varied considerably (cf. *Catechism*, 1447). Nevertheless, “beneath the changes in discipline and celebration that this sacrament has undergone over the centuries, the same *fundamental structure* is to be discerned. It comprises two equally essential elements: on the one hand, the acts

of the man who undergoes conversion through the action of the Holy Spirit: namely, contrition, confession, and satisfaction; on the other, God's action through the intervention of the Church. The Church, who through the bishop and his priests forgives sins in the name of Jesus Christ and determines the manner of satisfaction, also prays for the sinner and does penance with him. Thus the sinner is healed and re-established in ecclesial communion” (*Catechism*, 1448).

The first essential element of the sacrament of Penance thus consists in the penitent’s own acts, that is, in contrition of heart, the confession of sins, and the exercise of the penitential works imposed by the minister of Christ and of the Church.

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The second structuring element of this sacrament is the minister’s

absolution, the essential part of which are the words: “I absolve you from your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>[4]</sup> These are performative and efficacious words, for they indicate what is truly accomplished through sacramental absolution: the forgiveness and reconciliation of the sinner by the living God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. “In the sacrament of penance the Father receives the repentant son who comes back to him; Christ places the lost sheep on his shoulders and brings it back to the sheepfold, and the Holy Spirit sanctifies this temple of God again or lives more fully within it.”<sup>[5]</sup>

It is good to keep in mind that there is a close link between these two elements (the acts of the penitent and the absolution of the minister): the first is ordered to the second, and the two together form a moral unity,



which must necessarily be present for the valid celebration of the sacrament. In other words, the sacramental sign of penance can in no way be reduced simply to the minister's absolution, because this act can only be carried out if the penitent has previously confessed his sins with a contrite heart.

A necessary precondition for a correct and fruitful celebration of the sacrament of Confession is the examination of conscience, which a person should make before this sacrament of conversion. Indeed, no one can repent and accuse himself of his sins before God if, enlightened by divine help, he does not first reflect on his faults. Therefore, "the reception of this sacrament ought to be prepared for by an *examination of conscience* made in the light of the Word of God. The passages best suited to this can be found in the Ten Commandments, the moral

catechesis of the Gospels and the apostolic Letters, such as the Sermon on the Mount and the apostolic teachings” (*Catechism*, 1454).

Among the penitent’s acts, in the first place is contrition, which is “sorrow of the soul and detestation for the sin committed, together with the resolution not to sin again” (*Catechism*, 1451).<sup>[6]</sup> “Contrition of heart” (cf. Ps 50:19) implies a clear and firm act of intellect and will by which a person, moved by divine help and by faith, detests his sins insofar as they have distanced him from God (the theological dimension), from Christ (the Christological dimension), from the Church (the ecclesial dimension) and from his brothers and sisters in the human family. In addition to this “negative” aspect, by which a person rejects or detests sin, contrition also has a positive aspect, which involves the desire to return to God, in the

hope of obtaining his forgiveness and remaining in his love (cf. Is 55:7-8; Ez 18:21-23; Ez 33:10-11; Joel 2:12-13; Lk 5:11-32).

Contrition can be “perfect” or “imperfect.” “When it arises from a love by which God is loved above all else, contrition is called ‘perfect’ (contrition of charity). Such contrition remits venial sins; it also obtains forgiveness of mortal sins if it includes the firm resolution to have recourse to sacramental confession as soon as possible” (*Catechism*, 1452). “The contrition called ‘imperfect’ (or ‘attrition’) is also a gift of God, a prompting of the Holy Spirit. It is born of the consideration of sin's ugliness or the fear of eternal damnation and the other penalties threatening the sinner (contrition of fear). Such a stirring of conscience can initiate an interior process which, under the prompting of grace, will be brought

to completion by sacramental absolution. By itself however, imperfect contrition cannot obtain the forgiveness of grave sins, but it disposes one to obtain forgiveness in the sacrament of Penance”  
*(Catechism, 1453).*

The confession of sins is the penitential action by which the sinner manifests to the priest the faults for which he considers himself responsible, in order to obtain God’s forgiveness and to come to full communion with the Holy Church.

Over the centuries, theologians and pastors have frequently stated that the confession of sins should be sincere, clear, concrete, contrite, humble, discreet and decorous (that is, following the norms of prudence, modesty and charity), oral, and integral or complete.

Regarding integral confession, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

recalls the teaching of the Council of Trent: “All mortal sins of which penitents after a diligent self-examination are conscious must be recounted by them in confession, even if they are most secret and have been committed against the last two precepts of the Decalogue (cf. Ex 20:17; Mt 5:28); for these sins sometimes wound the soul more grievously and are more dangerous than those which are committed openly.”<sup>[7]</sup> —

Sacramental satisfaction consists in the voluntary acceptance and subsequent fulfilment of the penitential works imposed by the confessor. These actions are a sign and manifestation of interior repentance and of the authenticity of the sinner’s conversion. This satisfaction is intended to remedy, with the help of divine grace, the disorders that are caused by sins, both in the sinner himself and in his

family, social and ecclesial community. Absolution takes away sins, but does not cancel all the disorders that are caused by one's offense against God (cf. *Catechism*, 1459).

The minister of the sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation is the priest (bishop or priest), validly ordained and in possession of the faculty by which he can forgive the sins of the faithful to whom he imparts absolution (cf. *Catechism*, 1461-1462).

“When he celebrates the sacrament of Penance, the priest is fulfilling the ministry of the Good Shepherd who seeks the lost sheep, of the Good Samaritan who binds up wounds, of the Father who awaits the prodigal son and welcomes him on his return, and of the just and impartial judge whose judgment is both just and merciful. The priest is the sign and

the instrument of God's merciful love for the sinner” (*Catechism*,1465).

During the celebration of the sacrament of Reconciliation, the minister must therefore act as father and good shepherd, showing and transmitting to penitents the merciful love of the heavenly Father (cf. Lk 15:20-31) and following the example of Christ, the Good Shepherd. He should be a teacher of truth (communicating not his own ideas, but the doctrine of Christ, the Teacher who teaches the truth and indicates the way to God: cf. Mt 22:16). The confessor is also called to be a benign and efficacious judge of forgiveness: for this he must know the sins that weigh on the penitent's conscience and formulate a “spiritual judgement” on that person's dispositions (essentially with regard to the penitent's repentance and intention to amend their disordered conduct) so that the confessor can

impart absolution with knowledge of the facts and without arbitrariness.<sup>[8]</sup>

After the celebration of the sacrament, the minister has the absolute obligation to maintain the secrecy of all that he has heard in confession. “Given the delicacy and greatness of this ministry and the respect due to persons, the Church declares that every priest who hears confessions is bound under very severe penalties to keep absolute secrecy regarding the sins that his penitents have confessed to him. He can make no use of knowledge that confession gives him about penitents' lives. This secret, which admits of no exceptions, is called the ‘sacramental seal,’ because what the penitent has made known to the priest remains ‘sealed’ by the sacrament”  
(*Catechism*, 1467).

## **Effects of the Sacrament of Penance**



“The effects of the sacrament of Penance are: reconciliation with God and therefore the forgiveness of sins; reconciliation with the Church; recovery, if it has been lost, of the state of grace; remission of the eternal punishment merited by mortal sins, and remission, at least in part, of the temporal punishment which is the consequence of sin; peace, serenity of conscience and spiritual consolation; and an increase of spiritual strength for the struggle of Christian living” (*Compendium*, 310). Moreover, this sacrament conforms penitents in a particular way to Christ, conqueror of sin, through his redemptive Passion and glorious Resurrection (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 7).

Finally, it should be noted that during the celebration of the sacrament of Penance, the faithful experience in a mysterious, yet real and effective way, an anticipation of

the final judgement of Christ the Lord on mankind (cf. Mt 25:31-46; Rom 14:10-12; 2 Cor 5:10).<sup>[9]</sup> We can truly say that those who receive sacramental absolution have already been judged and absolved by the Lord: their sins have been forgiven forever.

“This sacrament of penance is for those who have fallen after baptism necessary for salvation, as baptism is for those who have not yet been regenerated.”<sup>[10]</sup>

The interior act of repentance (contrition of heart) leads the Christian to seek God’s forgiveness and full communion with Christ and with the Church. And Christ has determined that these great goods are to be obtained through the sacrament of Reconciliation, by giving the Apostles the power to forgive sins, and by linking his own forgiveness to the forgiveness that

they confer (cf. Jn 20:22-23). Thus, Christ has made this sacrament “the primary way of obtaining forgiveness and the remission of serious sin committed after baptism.”<sup>[11]</sup> —

The sinning Christian who desires reconciliation with God must, therefore, not merely repent inwardly and recognise his need for divine forgiveness. He must also accept the means by which God’s grace and forgiveness come to us in the age of the Church. For those who have sinned gravely after Baptism, there are not two different ways of attaining the state of grace: that of contrition of heart or that of the sacrament of Penance. These two ways are part of the same reality. True contrition always includes the desire to receive the sacrament of forgiveness. Repentance for sins coupled with a refusal to confess these sins to the priest in this

sacrament would be incoherent, for God himself has wanted us to use this means to obtain grace.

Regarding this connection between contrition and confession, the Church's authority has specified: "A person who is conscious of grave sin is not to celebrate Mass or receive the body of the Lord without previous sacramental confession unless there is a grave reason and there is no opportunity to confess; in this case the person is to remember the obligation to make an act of perfect contrition which includes the resolution of confessing as soon as possible" (*Code of Canon Law*, can. 916).

"According to the Church's command, 'after having attained the age of discretion, each of the faithful is bound by an obligation faithfully to confess serious sins at least once a

year” (*Catechism*, 1457; citation from *Code of Canon Law*, can. 989).

“Without being strictly necessary, confession of everyday faults (venial sins) is nevertheless strongly recommended by the Church. Indeed the regular confession of our venial sins helps us form our conscience, fight against evil tendencies, let ourselves be healed by Christ and progress in the life of the Spirit” (*Catechism*, 1458).

“The frequent and careful celebration of this sacrament is also very useful as a remedy for venial sins. This is not a mere ritual repetition or psychological exercise, but a serious striving to perfect the grace of baptism so that, as we bear in our body the death of Jesus Christ, his life may be seen in us ever more clearly.”<sup>[12]</sup> —

## **Anointing of the Sick**

The Anointing of the Sick is a sacrament instituted by Christ. We see hints of this sacrament in the Gospel of Mark (cf. Mk 6:13). The Apostle James recommends Anointing to the faithful and promulgates its use: “Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven” (James 5:14-15). The living Tradition of the Church (as seen in the texts of the Church’s Magisterium) has recognised this rite, which is especially intended to comfort the sick and purify them from sin and its consequences, as one of the seven sacraments of the New Law (cf. *Catechism*, 1512).

In order to help those whose life is endangered by a serious illness to

desire the assistance of this sacrament, they can be encouraged to consider that “those who are seriously ill need the special help of God's grace, lest, overtaken by anxiety, they become broken in spirit; and so that, in the face of trial, they not weaken in their faith. This is why Christ strengthens the sick faithful with the sacrament of anointing, strengthening them with a most firm protection.”<sup>[13]</sup> More precisely: “This sacrament gives the grace of the Holy Spirit to those who are sick: by this grace the whole person is aided in his health, comforted by trust in God, and strengthened against the temptations of the Evil One and against anxiety over death. In this way, the sick person is able not only to bear his ills bravely, but also to struggle against them. A return to physical health may follow the reception of this sacrament if this is conducive to the sick person's salvation. In addition,

the sacrament also provides the sick person with the forgiveness of sins and the fullness of Christian penance.”<sup>[14]</sup> \_\_\_

## **Structure of the sacramental sign and the celebration of the Sacrament**

According to the Ritual of the Anointing of the Sick, the proper material for the sacrament is olive oil or, if necessary, another vegetable oil.<sup>[15]</sup> \_\_\_ This oil must be blessed by the bishop or by a priest who has this faculty.<sup>[16]</sup> \_\_\_

The sacrament of Anointing is conferred by the anointing of the sick person’s forehead and hands.<sup>[17]</sup> \_\_\_

The sacramental formula, by which the Anointing of the Sick is conferred in the Latin rite, is as follows:

“Through this holy anointing may the Lord in his love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit.



Amen. May the Lord who frees you from sin save you and raise you up. Amen.”<sup>[18]</sup> \_\_\_\_\_

As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reminds us, “It is very fitting to celebrate [the Anointing of the Sick] within the Eucharist, the memorial of the Lord's Passover. If circumstances suggest it, the celebration of the sacrament can be preceded by the sacrament of Penance and followed by the sacrament of the Eucharist. As the sacrament of Christ's Passover the Eucharist should always be the last sacrament of the earthly journey, the ‘viaticum’ for ‘passing over’ to eternal life” (*Catechism*, 1517).

The minister of this sacrament is the priest (bishop or priest) alone.<sup>[19]</sup> \_\_\_\_\_

The Anointing of the Sick may be received by every baptised person who has reached the use of reason and is in danger of death due to

serious illness or to old age.<sup>[20]</sup> This sacrament cannot be administered to the deceased.

In order to receive the fruits of Anointing, the recipient of this sacrament must be previously reconciled with God and with the Church, at least in desire. In this latter case, such desire should be united to contrition for one's sins and the intention to confess them, when possible, in the sacrament of Penance. Because of this requirement of reconciliation with God, the Church foresees that, before Anointing, the sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation be administered to the sick person (cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 74).

The person who receives Anointing must have the intention, at least in a habitual and implicit way, to receive this sacrament.<sup>[21]</sup> In other words, the sick person should not have

retracted the will to die in a Christian way and with the supernatural aids intended.

## **Necessity and effects of the Anointing of the Sick**

Although the Anointing of the Sick may be administered to those who have lost their senses, care should be taken that this sacrament is received with the proper awareness, so that the sick person may be better disposed to receive the grace of the sacrament. Anointing should not be given to those who remain obstinately attached to manifest mortal sin (cf. *Code of Canon Law*, can. 1007).<sup>[22]</sup>

If a sick person who has received Anointing recovers his health, he may, in the case of a new serious illness, receive this sacrament again. In the course of the same illness, the sacrament may be repeated if the

condition worsens (cf. *Code of Canon Law*, can. 1004, 2).

Finally, the following indication of the Church should be kept in mind: “This sacrament is to be administered in a case of doubt whether the sick person has attained the use of reason, is dangerously ill, or is dead” (*Code of Canon Law*, can. 1005).

The reception of the Anointing of the Sick is not necessary as a means of salvation, but one should not voluntarily dispense with this sacrament, if it is possible to receive it. Trying to do without Anointing would be equivalent to refusing an aid of great effectiveness for salvation. To deprive a sick person of this help could constitute a grave sin.

The faithful should bear in mind that in our time there is a tendency to “isolate” sickness and death. In clinics and hospitals, the seriously ill

sometimes die in solitude, even if they are surrounded by others and very well cared for in an intensive care unit. Everyone (in particular Christians working in hospitals) should make an effort to ensure that the sick in the hospital do not lack the means which give consolation and relief for the suffering body and soul. Among these means – in addition to the sacrament of Penance and Viaticum – is the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.

As a true and proper sacrament of the New Law, the Anointing of the Sick offers the Christian faithful sanctifying grace; moreover, the specific sacramental grace of Anointing has the following effects:

– More intimate union with Christ in his redemptive Passion, for the person's good and that of the whole Church (cf. *Catechism*, 1521-1522; 1532);

– Consolation, peace and courage to overcome the difficulties and sufferings which come with serious illness or with the frailty of old age (cf. *Catechism*, 1520; 1532);

– The healing of the remnants of sin and the forgiveness of venial sins, as well as mortal sins in cases where the sick person was repentant but had not been able to receive the sacrament of Penance (cf. *Catechism*, 1520);

– The restoration of bodily health, if such is God’s will (cf. *Catechism*, 1520)<sup>[23]</sup>;

– Preparation for the passage to eternal life. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states: “This grace [proper to the Anointing of the Sick] is a gift of the Holy Spirit, who renews trust and faith in God and strengthens against the temptations of the evil one, the temptation to discouragement and anguish in the

face of death (cf. Heb 2:15)”  
(*Catechism*, 1520).

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### ***Basic bibliography***

*Catechism of the Catholic Church*,  
1499-1532.

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[1] Pope Francis, General Audience, 19  
February 2014.

[2] Cf. *Catechism*, 976; Council of  
Trent, sess. XIV, Doctrine on the  
Sacrament of Penance, ch. 1:  
Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*,  
1670.

[3] Clearly, we are speaking of the  
penitent's acts not as purely human  
acts (forgiveness of sins is not  
obtained by one's own strength), but

as acts carried out with faith in Christ the Redeemer and under the action of the Holy Spirit (cf. *Catechism*, 1448).

[4] Rite of Penance, *Praenotanda*, 19.

[5] *Ibid*, *Praenotanda*, 6, d.

[6] The quotation given in the *Catechism* is from the Council of Trent: Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 1676.

[7] Council of Trent (1551): Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 1680. Cited in *Catechism*, 1456.

[8] If the confessor encounters persons who wish to draw near to God but who cannot yet receive absolution because they lack the proper dispositions, he will seek to treat them with understanding and mercy, accompanying them pastorally so that they may be integrated into the Christian



community in the various ways possible for them. More specifically, in the case of divorced and civilly remarried persons, or persons living together irregularly, he will help them to see that, in spite of their situation, they “continue to belong to the Church, which accompanies them with special concern and encourages them to live as fully as possible the Christian life through regular participation at Mass, albeit without receiving communion, listening to the word of God, eucharistic adoration, prayer, participation in the life of the community, honest dialogue with a priest or spiritual director, dedication to the life of charity, works of penance, and commitment to the education of their children” (Pope Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum caritatis*, 29).

<sup>[9]</sup> The *Catechism* (1470) expresses it thus: “In this sacrament, the sinner,

placing himself before the merciful judgment of God, *anticipates* in a certain way *the judgment* to which he will be subjected at the end of his earthly life.”

[10] Council of Trent, sess. XIV, Doctrine on the Sacrament of Penance, ch. 2: DH 1672; EWTN Online Library.

[11] Saint John Paul II, *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, 31, I.

[12] Ritual of Penance, *Praenotanda*, 7, b.

[13] Ritual of the Anointing and Pastoral Care of the Sick, *Praenotanda*, 5.

[14] *Ibid.*, *Praenotanda*, 6.

[15] Cf. Ritual of the Anointing and Pastoral Care of the Sick, *Praenotanda*, 20.

[16] Cf. *ibid.*, *Praenotanda*, 21.

<sup>[17]</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, *Praenotanda*, 23. In case of necessity, it would be sufficient to make a single anointing on the forehead or on another suitable part of the body (cf. *ibid.*). In the Eastern Churches—for example, in the Byzantine, Coptic and Armenian Churches—seven anointings are performed (in a manner similar to the ancient Roman liturgy), on the forehead, lips, nose, ears, chest, hands and feet of the sick person. These various anointings are carried out for the purification of sins committed with the mind and with each of the senses; cf. I.-H Dalmais, *Las Liturgias Orientales*, Bilbao 1991, 127-128.

<sup>[18]</sup> *Ibid.*, *Praenotanda*, 25. This formula is distributed in such a way that the first part is said while anointing the forehead and the second while anointing the hands. In case of necessity, when only one anointing can be done, the minister

simultaneously pronounces the entire formula (cf. *Ibid.*, *Praenotanda*, 23). In the Eastern Byzantine Church, cited above, at each anointing the following formula is pronounced: “Holy Father, physician of souls and bodies, who hast sent thy only Son Jesus Christ, to heal every evil and to deliver from death, heal also thy servant from his weakness both bodily and spiritual, through the grace of thy Christ” (I.-H Dalmais, *Las Liturgias Orientales*, cit., 129).

<sup>[19]</sup> Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, can. 1003,1. Neither deacons nor lay faithful can validly administer the Anointing of the Sick (cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “Note on the Minister of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick,” *Notitiae* 41 [2005] 479).

<sup>[20]</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 73; *Code of Canon Law*, can. 1004-1007.

Therefore, the Anointing of the Sick is not a sacrament for those faithful who have simply reached the so-called “third age” (it is not the sacrament of the retired), nor is it a sacrament only for the dying. In the case of a surgical operation, the Anointing of the Sick can be administered when the illness, which is the reason for the operation, endangers the life of the sick person.

<sup>[21]</sup> In this regard, the *Code of Canon Law* states: “This sacrament is to be conferred on the sick who at least implicitly requested it when they were in control of their faculties” (can. 1006).

<sup>[22]</sup> Here, a distinction should be made between the case of the unrepentant person who obstinately wishes to remain in a state of mortal sin that is externally known to all, and that of the person who finds himself in a situation that is seriously contrary to

the Law of God, but not because of bad will. In this latter case, the person has acted out of ignorance, or because he is immersed in a strongly secularised culture and the serious illness has taken him by surprise. In the first case, Anointing should not be administered, as it would be futile for the sinner. In the second case, yes, especially if the sick person reacts positively to the priest's exhortation to abandon himself to God's mercy, repent of his sins and resolve to amend his life in the future. In any case, if the minister has doubts as to whether a person does indeed persist obstinately in a situation of publicly known grave sin, he may administer this sacrament *sub conditione*.

[23] Cf. Council of Florence: Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 1325.

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