

WHEN TO CALL A PRIEST

If you desire the ministry of a priest, please make arrangements as soon as possible. A priest may not be available at short notice due to other pastoral responsibilities.

If a hospital stay is scheduled in advance, you can ideally arrange to receive the Anointing of the Sick at your parish before going to the hospital.

IF A PRIEST IS NOT AVAILABLE, WHEN CAN A DEACON OR LAY MINISTER HELP?

- The Eucharist can be distributed by both deacons and lay ministers.
- Lay ministers and chaplains can also be an important source of prayer, counsel, and consolation.
- The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick and the Sacrament of Reconciliation can only be provided by a priest.
- When necessary, a deacon or lay minister can bring the Eucharist as Viaticum to those who are dying.

LORD JESUS.

YOU CAME INTO THE WORLD TO HEAL OUR INFIRMITIES AND TO ENDURE OUR SUFFERINGS. YOU WENT ABOUT HEALING ALL AND BRINGING COMFORT TO THOSE IN PAIN AND NEED. I COME BEFORE YOU NOW IN THIS TIME OF ILLNESS ASKING THAT YOU MAY BE THE SOURCE OF MY STRENGTH IN BODY, COURAGE IN SPIRIT AND PATIENCE IN PAIN. MAY I JOIN MYSELF MORE CLOSELY TO YOU ON THE CROSS AND IN YOUR SUFFERING THAT THROUGH THEM I MAY DRAW PATIENCE AND HOPE. ASSIST ME SO THAT IN NEWNESS OF HEALTH AND UNITED MORE CLOSELY TO YOUR FAMILY, THE CHURCH, I MAY GIVE PRAISE AND HONOR TO YOUR NAME.

AMEN.

A NOTE ABOUT SUFFERING

Jesus shared in our suffering to the fullest degree possible in his Cross and Passion. Then, in his Resurrection, he assures ultimate victory over suffering and death for those who are united to him in Baptism. While healing can and does occur in different ways through the Sacraments, we also know that suffering is an inevitable part of life on this side of eternity.

When we suffer, we have an opportunity to unite our experience with that of Jesus. As Pope St. John Paul II wrote,

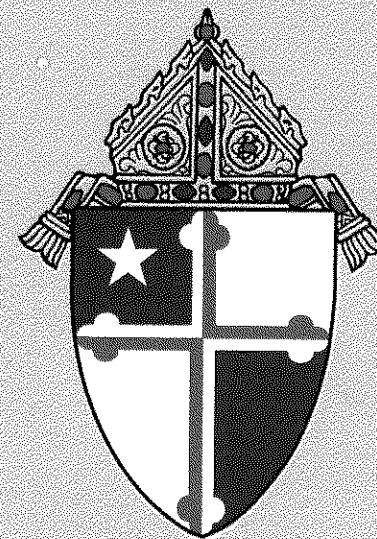
"All those who suffer have been called once and for all to become sharers 'in Christ's sufferings,' just as all have been called to 'complete' with their own suffering 'what is lacking in Christ's afflictions.' At one and the same time, Christ has taught man to do good by his suffering and to do good to those who suffer. In this double aspect He has completely revealed the meaning of suffering."

John Paul II, Salvifici Doloris, VII:30.

Understood in these terms, we can derive spiritual benefit from suffering. We can offer our suffering to God as a sacrifice to accompany our prayers for others who are in need.

Whether you are a patient, or whether you are caring for someone who is sick, may you find grace and strength through our Lord Jesus Christ in your time of need.

SPIRITUAL CARE FOR CATHOLIC PATIENTS



*"My grace is
sufficient for you."*

2 CORINTHIANS 12:9

FOR THOSE WHO ARE SEEKING HEALING

Sickness and suffering are among the most difficult and mysterious of all human experiences. But Jesus Christ has given a new meaning to suffering through his Death and Resurrection.

God took on our humanity and experienced suffering to the greatest degree on the Cross. His Resurrection then shows us his victory over suffering and death.

SACRAMENTAL GRACE

The Sacraments apply the grace and power of Christ's death and Resurrection to the lives of Catholics. We read in the Gospels of Jesus' holistic care for the suffering. Catholics understand that healing has aspects which are physical, emotional, and spiritual. Through the Sacraments, we are strengthened by the presence of Jesus today. The Sacraments also enable us to unite our suffering to the suffering of Jesus.

FOR FURTHER READING

For a thorough discussion on the care of the sick and dying, including important information about end-of-life decisions, please refer to "Comfort and Consolation: Care of the Sick and Dying" – a Pastoral Letter from the Catholic Bishops of Maryland. It is available from the Maryland Catholic Conference at www.mdccathcon.org/comfort.

SACRAMENTS AVAILABLE AT HOSPITALS AND NURSING HOMES

Eucharist (Holy Communion). The Eucharist is the Body of Christ and true spiritual food. This is the most important Sacrament that a Catholic can receive following Baptism.

Anointing of the Sick. The Sacrament of Anointing brings the Holy Spirit's power of healing and forgiveness. It can be sought any time a person is seriously ill.

Reconciliation (Penance or Confession). Reconciliation brings complete forgiveness of sin. It restores and reunites the repentant sinner with God and the faithful.

AS THE TIME OF DEATH DRAWS NEAR

Do not wait until the last moments of life to seek a priest for an Anointing. In past generations, a fear of death led some to avoid this Sacrament until the very end. This is why Anointing is sometimes imprecisely referred to as "last rites." But the Anointing prayers speak of grace and healing, and of uniting our suffering to the suffering of Christ.

If a patient has already been anointed for a current illness, then you can trust in the permanent power of the Sacrament—it is not necessary to anoint again.

When possible, Holy Communion (sometimes referred to as Viaticum or Food for the Journey) and prayers at the time of death are an important comfort and support for those who are nearing the end of life. The Eucharist, which is reserved in the Church tabernacle after Mass, can be brought at this time to individuals by a priest, a deacon, or a designated lay minister.

If you have been away from the Church for any reason, the Church is eager to welcome you home. If you would like to contact a local priest, then you can ask your healthcare staff for assistance. You can also go to www.archbalt.org or www.catholicscomehome.org.