

Signs and Symbols of the Sacrament



As Catholics we believe the Anointing of the Sick just like every other sacrament uses human objects and actions as symbols to point to something beyond themselves which is God's grace.

Key Points

- Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick provides courage, strength, and peace in the face of illness.
- It gives the sick person grace to unite his or her suffering to the passion of Christ.
- The sacrament provides physical and/or spiritual healing according to God's will.
- It helps the sick person to trust in God no matter what happens.
- It offers necessary graces so that the sick person may prepare for death.
- This sacrament pours out consolation and hope.
- It provides an opportunity for the forgiveness of sins even when the sick person is too ill to receive the sacrament of Reconciliation.



Use of Oil has been recognized from ancient times for its properties of healing and cleansing. A person who has been anointed with oil is set apart for a special purpose. In terms of the sacrament, oil symbolizes healing from illness, cleansing from sin, and consecration (i.e., setting apart as holy) to God.

The priest or bishop often anoints the sick person's forehead and palms with the **sign of the cross**, which reminds us as Catholics that our salvation comes through the cross of Jesus Christ, and that we are called to unite our sufferings to those of Jesus Christ.

The **forehead** is one of the most visible places on the human body. We believe that our faith in Christ Jesus should be visible through our actions. An anointing on the forehead also symbolizes the need to know Christ and follow Him.



Human **hands** are often associated with human activity. When sick people are anointed on the hands, they are reminded that they must turn all their activity over to Christ. They must place themselves under His will, even if He wills their earthly activity to cease.

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The **laying on of hands** by the priest or bishop comforts the sick person but also symbolizes the power of God entering the sick person through the mediation of the priest or bishop