

## **Guide to Last Rites & Anointing the sick**

### **What are Last Rites?**

The Last Rights, specifically refers to 3 sacraments. These are confession, the anointing of the sick, and final Holy Communion. Each of these is a way to cleanse a person's soul of sins in preparation for the afterlife.

In the past, Last Rites were only given to those who were on their deathbed. It wasn't enough to simply be ill. One had to be nearing their final breaths. Today, the Last Rights are standard for any Christian who is elderly, terminally ill, or undertaking a life-threatening surgery. Let's look closer at the three sacraments:

**Confession:** First, if the sick person is able, he or she should go to a sacramental confession. While this isn't required, it's the best way to ensure the soul is ready to receive the final Communion.

**Anointing of the sick:** This practice is actually preferred when the sick person is not near death. The tradition itself involves anointing a person with oil and reading from Scripture. This is either done for one individual or an entire group at a congregation. The anointing of the sick was traditionally only done for those in extreme danger of dying. Today, the Church encourages this sacrament for anyone who is sick or in his or her old age.

The Anointing of the Sick, which used to be called the Last Rites by many, should really be given at the start of a serious illness and whenever the illness takes a more seditious turn. ... Dying without the Sacraments and Last Rites just means that you may lack that spiritual comfort at a most testing time.

**Final Communion:** Communion is when one receives the Eucharist or the body and blood of Christ after the confession and anointing of the sick. If someone can't travel due to his or her condition, the final communion is brought to him or her.

Finally, if someone is in immediate danger of death, there is also the Apostolic Pardon. This isn't a sacrament or even a rite. It's offered by a priest or by the dying person themselves if they reach the requirements for this particular practice. An Apostolic Pardon is an indulgence given immediately before dying to remove any punishments for any sins.

### **When are Last Rites Performed?**

In the past, the Last Rites were commonly performed in extreme circumstances. They were for those who were nearing death. When we think of Last Rites, images of war and famine might spring to mind. During times where death was common, priests would circle the battlefield, hospitals, and even neighborhoods performing Last Rites for those on their deathbeds.

Today, the Christian belief is a little different. There's a proper time for every sacrament. For example, confession and Holy Communion are welcome all the time.

However, anointing of the sick has some limitations. Even these aren't as strict as you might think. This is not a sacrament only for those at the point of death. The anointing of the sick is for anyone who is beginning to be in danger of death. Whether they're approaching their old age or they're suffering from a long-term illness, Last Rites are an option.

Christian leaders urge believers not to wait until the final moments to make the call for their loved ones. There are no limits to how many times one can receive the Last Rites. These can be given many times if needed. Because of this, it's safer to err on the side of caution when performing Last Rites.

### **What's Said During Last Rites?**

During the Last Rites, there are several prayers given. These are not funeral prayers, though these sometimes overlap. The first prayer is for the anointing of the sick. This prayer is simple. It goes, "Through this holy anointing may the Lord in his love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit. May the Lord who frees you from sin save you and raise you up."

The priest will then say the Lord's Prayer. The priest will recite a final prayer during the communion— a prayer for protection from the Lord. It goes, "This is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Happy are those who are called to his supper." The recipient will then consume the Eucharist, usually wine and a wafer, which concludes the sacraments.

### **Who Can Perform Last Rites?**

Only a bishop or priest gives certain sacraments. Only bishops and priests can be the minister for a confession or the anointing of the sick. However, in dire circumstances, lay people have actions they can take.

You don't need to be a priest or a bishop to perform the Holy Communion. There is no scripture restricting who can give a communion. This is something anyone can do if a priest is not reachable in time.

### **Who Can Receive Last Rites?**

If a sick person is not baptized and is approaching death, he or she can not request Last Rites. They will need to request a baptism, which is a gateway to the sacraments.

## **How to Perform Last Rites**

The administration of the Last Rites depends on the specific circumstances. Some dying people are not able to travel or communicate, and they might not be in good standing with the church. All this plays a role in how these Last Rites are performed. However, here is an overview of the process.

### **Contacting the church**

The first step is to contact the church. If you or a loved one is nearing death and wants Last Rites, you'll need to make arrangements to do so.

However, you'll need to make arrangements with the church for the anointing of the sick. In some cases, a priest travels to a sick person and performs bedside Last Rites. Again, this will depend on the individual and the situation.

### **Sacrament of confession**

If the person can speak, the priest will start with the sacrament of confession. The priest first makes the Sign of the Cross, and they lead the ill person in what's known as an Act of Contrition. This is a prayer that expresses sorrow for one's sins.

Next, the priest recites the Apostles' Creed, which is a renewal of one's baptismal promises. The recipient does not need to be Christian to participate in these prayers.

### **Anointing of the sick**

The second sacrament is the anointing of the sick. If the recipient is Christian, they are anointed with holy oil. For non-Christian, the priest uses olive or seed oil. Again, the priest leads the recipient in a prayer to heal his or her body.

### **Communion**

Finally, the last sacrament is Communion. The priest gives the dying or ill recipient the Eucharist, the body and blood of Christ. This symbolizes food for the journey into one's next life in Heaven.

The last step in this sacrament is the final Communion prayer. If the person is conscious, he or she might request different prayers after the Last Rites.

### **Additional Last Rites**

It is not uncommon to perform several Last Rites for the same person. Because the Anglican Church does not recommend waiting until one is on their deathbed to perform the Last Rites, some people will receive this ceremony multiple times during their life.

Last Rites are commonly taken before any extreme medical treatments, like surgery. They're also common for the elderly who aren't sure how much time.

they have left. The Last Rites are a way to free one's soul from sins so he or she can prepare for the afterlife in peace.

### **Last Rites: How Christian Prepare for Death**

Each culture and religion has a different approach to death. For Anglicans, this means holding a Mass of Christian Burial, listening to Christian funeral songs, and performing Last Rites. In Anglican tradition, the Last Rites are a way to protect those who are in grave danger of dying. This ritual prepares the soul to face their final judgment in the afterlife.

Christians believe that by confessing one's sins and receiving Holy Communion, a dying person is free from his or her sins in the face of God. Though these prayers and sacraments were originally called the Last Rites because they were the last thing a person received before dying, this is no longer the case. Today, the Christian Church recommends these Last Rites to anyone who is facing death in some way, whether that's by old age or disease.

The Last Rites bring peace to those approaching death as well as their families. In the Christian faith, this means turning to the church.

The last rites, in Christian Faith, are the last prayers and ministrations given to an individual of the faith, when possible, shortly before death. They may be administered to those awaiting execution, mortally injured, or terminally ill. Lasts rites can not be performed on people who have already died.

### **Obtaining the Sacrament of the Sick**

- Seek the sacrament long before imminent death. Priests, who often serve in multiple locations, may be occupied with other duties and unable to respond. Weekend Mass schedules often prevent priests from reaching dying people.
- If someone is seriously ill, call the parish and inform the priest or staff member. Leave the full name of the person, institution, room number and phone number of the caregiver.

Don't assume that the hospital or nursing home will call the parish. Don't be shy about following up. Messages get garbled and lost.

- Find out which staff person at a hospital, hospice or nursing home is responsible for spiritual care. Many institutions, especially Christian ones, have contact with priests assigned to provide the sacraments. These priests work in partnership with your pastor.
- A person who is facing major surgery or who has any form of serious illness, including addictions or mental problems, may be anointed at the parish. Some parishes schedule the sacrament of the sick regularly, usually after Mass. Also, the sacrament may be repeated if a person's condition worsens over time. However, there is no need to anoint a person again if he or she has been recently anointed.

All the prayers in the Last Rites refer to the living person, not a corpse. Though some of the prayers mention the possibility of imminent death, they simply commend a living person to God's mercy. There is nothing like an absolution of a dead person.

We discover the true purpose of the sacrament of the sick by examining its current formula. As the priest anoints the sick person with the Oil of the Sick, he says these carefully chosen words: "Through this holy anointing, may the Lord in his love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit. May the Lord who frees you from sin save you and raise you up amen."

This prayer requests three specific things from the Lord. First, it seeks "help" through "the grace of the Holy Spirit."

This help can take several forms: patient endurance of physical suffering, provision of useful medical care, renewed hope, and perhaps even miraculous healing, which does happen now and then.

Second, the prayer asks for forgiveness of sin. Here we see a clear linkage between the sacrament of the sick and penance, which may also be offered by the priest during his visit to the sick person. If the sick person cannot confess his or her sins because of unconsciousness or the inability to speak, the sacrament of the sick forgives all sins. This freedom from sin – spiritual disease – is vastly more important than mere physical healing, which is always temporary in that every healed person will eventually die.

Third, the formula concludes by requesting that the sick person be "raised up." The phrase "raised up" has a double meaning: "raised up" from the particular disease or injury; and, much more importantly, "raised up" from death into the Resurrection of Christ at the end of time. In light of the sacramental formula, it makes no sense to celebrate the sacrament of the sick for someone already dead.

So, what happens if the priest doesn't get to the dying person in time? Then a priest may administer the sacraments "conditionally." This may happen if the person has just expired or if there is any doubt that the person is truly dead. In cases like this, the priest will administer the sacraments with the assumption that the person is still alive. Most priests will do this if the apparent death happened within 20 or 30 minutes. But no one would anoint a corpse already in the morgue.

Also, the Anglican Ritual contains prayers that can be said in the presence of a dead person, and a priest or deacon may bless the body with Holy Water. These prayers and ritual acts offer grieving people support and hope in a time of trauma and darkness.

Sad to say, many people now die without receiving the sacraments. This happens because some people wait until their loved one is on the verge of death and then can't find a priest.

To avoid this, people should carefully plan their own spiritual care or the care needed by their loved ones in a timely manner. As soon as a person becomes seriously ill, the priest or pastoral worker in the parish should be notified. Then arrangements can be made for the person to receive the sacrament of the sick, Holy Communion throughout their illness and the sacrament of penance when they are ready to become fully reconciled with the Lord.

Today, pastoral care of the sick is a “team effort,” not limited to the frantic arrival of a harried priest who anoints a dying person and then rushes off to another emergency.

Proper spiritual care should be spread out over a much longer period of time and involve others, such as ministers of Holy Communion, hospice chaplains, the parish deacon, and so forth.

The old focus on “Last Rites” as something done to corpses needs to be corrected. After all, the Church offers so much more in spiritual healing, comfort, and forgiveness through the sacramental touch of the Lord to living people.

“Last Rites” refers to the sacrament that Christian receives at the end of their lives, specifically Confession, Holy Communion, and the Anointing of the Sick, and the prayers accompanying each. The phrase is less common today than it was in past centuries.

While last rites is sometimes used to refer to only one of the seven sacraments, the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick (also known just as the Sacrament of the Sick), that application is technically incorrect. The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, previously known as Extreme Unction, is administered both to the dying and to those who are gravely ill or are about to undergo a serious operation, for the recovery of their health and for spiritual strength.

The Anointing of the Sick is technically part of last rites rather than last rites itself.