

Tridentine Community News

October 14, 2007

The Classic Form of Extreme Unction

We continue our coverage of the Extraordinary (Tridentine) Forms of the Sacraments with a description of the Anointing of the Sick. As of September 14, 2007, any priest of the Latin Rite may employ the Extraordinary Forms of the Sacraments without requiring permission from his bishop. You may now request the Traditional Form of Extreme Unction from Fr. Hrytsyk at Assumption – Windsor, and from Fr. Borkowski at St. Josaphat.

This sacrament goes by a number of names. It is officially known as “*Sacramentum Extrémae Unctionis*,” hence the proper English term for the Traditional Form is “Extreme Unction.” The latter word is derived from the Latin for “anointing with oil.” Informally, it has been known as Last Rites, as it is often given before the point of death. In recent years, the Church has encouraged others with serious or chronic illnesses to receive the Sacrament. As part of this re-emphasis, it has more often become referred to as Anointing of the Sick. This change in emphasis is also pertinent to the Classic Form of the Sacrament. There is no rubrical or theological reason to deny the sacrament to those not at the point of death.

Extreme Unction may only be given to those capable of reason, who have contrition for their sins, and who have at least a general desire to receive the Sacrament. As a result, it may not be given to young children or to the insane.

The priest brings a vessel with the Oil of the Sick. The presence of a server is preferred; he brings a crucifix and holy water with an aspersory. At the sick person’s side, there should be a table covered with a white cloth, with six small pieces of cotton, a small piece of bread, a bowl of water, a hand towel, and a lit candle in a candlestick.

The priest arrives in the room and begins by saying, “*Pax huic dōmū*” (Peace be unto this home). Vested in surplice and purple stole, he presents the crucifix to the sick person to be kissed, then sprinkles the sick person, the room, and the bystanders each in the form of a cross, while reciting the “*Aspérge me*.” If the sick person wishes, he may receive the Sacrament of Confession at this time.

The priest then recites a prayer which includes the sentences, “Drive forth from this place the spirits of evil, let thine angel of peace come hither, and banish all harmful dissension from this house...May He [our Lord] appoint over them a good angel as a guardian...”

The sick person then recites the *Confiteor* in Latin or in the vernacular, after which the priest says the *Misereatur* and *Indulgentiam*. [Note: This seems to presuppose either the liturgical sophistication of the sick person, or at least the presence of a prayer card to assist him.]

The bystanders may optionally recite the Litany of the Saints as the priest says a prayer which includes, “May all power of the devil become extinct in thee through the laying on of my hand and through the invocation of the glorious and blessed Virgin Mary...”

He dips his thumb into the Oil of the Sick and anoints the person on the eyelids, earlobes, nostrils, (closed) lips, palms, and insteps or soles of the feet while reciting prayers pertinent to the particular part, such as for the lips: “Through this holy anointing and through His tender mercy may the Lord forgive thee whatever sins thou has committed by the sense of taste and the power of speech. Amen.” These prayers constitute the essential form of the Sacrament, just as the words of absolution constitute the essential form of Confession.



The six pieces of cotton are then used to wipe the oil off each part. Those cotton pieces must then be burned and the ashes thrown into the *sacrarium* at the church, the sink which drains directly into the ground.

The priest wipes his thumb with the piece of bread, then washes his hands. The bread and water are also taken to the church and disposed of in the *sacrarium*. If the church does not have a *sacrarium*, presumably the remains are to be disposed of directly into the soil outside the church.

The priest then recites a Kyrie and Pater Noster, and recites three closing prayers. If the person is in danger of death, the priest should recite the “Rite of Apostolic Blessing With

Plenary Indulgence at the Hour of Death” and “Commendation of a Departing Soul” prayers, which lengthen the service by approximately 20 minutes.

By comparison, the Novus Ordo form of the Sacrament includes a reading from the Gospel of St. Matthew and provides a specific place for the sick person to receive Holy Communion, but omits references to the devil and the angels. Instead, it beseeches the Holy Ghost’s assistance. There is no specific reference to prayers akin to the Apostolic Blessing or Commendation of a Departing Soul at the conclusion. One’s first impression is that the Ordinary Form is more of a blessing and encouragement for the sick person to become well, whereas the Extraordinary Form beseeches heaven’s assistance to protect the soul during its trial.

Correction re: Requiem Mass

In our previous column describing the Extraordinary Form of the Funeral Mass, it was stated that there is a Last Gospel at the end of Mass, as during a normal Mass. In actuality, the Last Gospel is omitted if the Absolution ceremony at the casket immediately follows the Mass, which is the usual case. Note that the Silver Missals (the Requiem version of the Red Missals) do not mention this rule.