

How Should Someone Be Spiritually Cared For at End of Life? **Sacramental Care for Those Confronting a Potentially Mortal Illness Or Coming to the Natural End of Life**

1. When a person first becomes aware of the illness, and it may also simply be from a serious weakness brought on by old age, they should ask for the Anointing of the Sick. This assists them in the course of the illness, no matter how it ends, by strengthening their faith, bearing suffering well, and it may provide healing. It is recommended that the person also receive the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation at the same time. (It is important to emphasize that when Christians receive their share of the Cross they should dedicate that hard experience to some intention: the salvation of souls, spreading of the Gospel, helping someone in need, etc. Christians cannot explain the particulars of why every suffering happens, but they know how to make good use of it. Of course, the infinitely perfect example of this is Christ who died on the Cross in order to save the world.)
2. A person who will not be able to attend Mass should be enrolled in the list of people who receive visits for Holy Communion. Please contact the parish or, if at a hospital or care facility, you could notify the local chaplain to arrange for sacramental care. If a friend or relative wishes to take up that service he or she must be trained and approved for it.
3. If a person's condition becomes markedly worse he can again ask for the Anointing of the Sick. If a person is in an immediate life-threatening situation please call this number reserved exclusively for emergency sacramental care: 303-435-1169.
4. When someone is approaching the end of life a priest should be contacted while the patient is still conscious and has some awareness. Then the person can receive all three sacraments that constitute the Last Rites: Penance and Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, and Eucharist as Viaticum. The priest can also give someone the Apostolic Pardon while receiving Viaticum. These three sacraments beautifully mirror the three sacraments of initiation. The Catechism states at **#1525**: *Thus, just as the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist form a unity called "the sacraments of Christian initiation," so too it can be said that Penance, the Anointing of the Sick and the Eucharist as viaticum constitute at the end of Christian life "the sacraments that prepare for our heavenly homeland" or the sacraments that complete the earthly pilgrimage.*
5. While someone is actively dying there are beautiful prayers called the Commendation of the Dying that can also be prayed for him or her.
6. After a person has died then a funeral Mass is celebrated as one last act of spiritual care and intercession for the person. In Christ, the deceased is not beyond our love and care! This is ideally held at our parish church. In addition, there is an optional vigil/wake and the actual graveside prayers. Please contact the parish before committing with a funeral home to a funeral plan and schedule.

If someone is not Catholic but towards the end of life wishes to become Catholic they can receive the Sacraments of Initiation in a special rite. This can even be at a home or hospital bed.