



**THE SACRAMENT OF THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK
IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE CONSTITUTION ON THE
SACRED LITURGY, “SACROSANCTUM CONCILIIUM”**

O Sacramento da Unção dos Enfermos na perspectiva da Constituição sobre a Sagrada Liturgia, “Sacrosanctum Concilium”

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ABSTRACT: The Constitution on the Holy Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium* was the first document adopted by the Second Vatican Council, which took a significant step in renewing the liturgy, including the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. Therefore, this article discusses the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick in the perspective of the Constitution on the Holy Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*: abandoning the name *Last Anointing*, returning to the name *Anointing of the Sick*; instructing that the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick be given to every baptized person whose health is seriously impaired by illness or old age and not only in the face of death; not limiting the number of anointings of the sick, but instructing to rationally take into account the existing circumstances in which the anointing is required. The close connection of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick to other sacraments, that is, the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist, is discussed. It is revealed that the Sacrament of the Sick is administered in the context of two sacraments: the sick is anointed after the Sacrament of Penance before receiving Communion. The article also discusses the fruits provided by the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick – a special gift of the Holy Spirit, union with Christ’s suffering, an ecclesial grace, preparation for the last journey – which the baptized are invited to properly experience during illness.

KEYWORDS: Vatican II Council. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. Anointing of the Sick. Liturgy.

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RESUMO: A Constituição sobre a Sagrada Liturgia, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, foi o primeiro documento promulgado pelo Concílio Vaticano II, e foi um passo significativo na renovação da liturgia, incluindo o Sacramento da Unção dos Enfermos. Este artigo, portanto, discute esse Sacramento a partir da perspectiva da Constituição sobre a Sagrada Liturgia *Sacrosanctum Concilium*: o abandono da nomeação de *Últimos Ritos*, retornando ao nome de *Unção dos Enfermos*; a instrução de que o Sacramento da Unção dos Enfermos seja administrado a todo batizado cuja saúde seja seriamente prejudicada por doença ou velhice, e não apenas diante da morte; a instrução de não limitar o número de unções dos enfermos, mas levar em conta racionalmente as circunstâncias em que essa unção é necessária. O Sacramento, em questão, é discutido em sua estreita relação com os Sacramentos da Penitência e da Eucaristia. O Sacramento da Unção dos Enfermos é administrado no contexto de dois Sacramentos: o doente é ungido após o Sacramento da Penitência e antes de receber a Comunhão. E, ao mesmo tempo, o artigo discute os frutos proporcionados pelo Sacramento da Unção dos Enfermos — o dom especial do Espírito Santo, a união com a Paixão de Cristo, a graça eclesial, a preparação para a viagem final — que os batizados são chamados a viver de maneira adequada durante sua doença.

PALAVRAS-CHAVES: Concílio Vaticano II. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. Unção dos Enfermos. Liturgia.

Introduction

Sixty years ago, the Second Vatican Council was held, where almost three thousand bishops from all over the world worked in four working sessions, from 1962 to 1965. The meeting was opened by Pope John XXIII and closed by Paul VI, and was also attended by two future popes — John Paul II and Benedict XVI. These two popes in particular, at the dawn of the 21st century, sought to embody in their pontificates the spirit of the renewal of the Church. Pope Benedict XVI emphasized in his teachings that it is necessary to constantly “return to the documents of the Second Vatican Council” (BENEDIKTAS XVI, 2012a, p. 2) and to implement the renewal of the Church. If the aim is for the Church to remain viable in the 21st century, it is vital to realize and implement the resolutions of the Council in the current life of the Church.

The ideas expressed at the Second Vatican Council were set out in sixteen documents that reflect the role of the Church in the modern world — four constitutions, nine decrees and three declarations — and became the new norm of life for the Catholic Church. The Constitution on the Holy Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium* was the first document discussed by the Council and one of the first published at the end of the second session of the Council, on December 4, 1963. The bishops of the Council accepted the draft constitution more willingly than the drafts of some

other documents, because it better reflected the direction of the work of the Council established by Pope John XXIII — to modernize (*aggiornamento*) the Church's life while maintaining fidelity to tradition. Thus, the adoption of the documents of the Council begins with the theme of the liturgy. When the adoption of the documents of the Council began with the theme of the liturgy, the primacy of God was emphasized, because God is at the centre of the liturgy. When the focus is not on God, all the rest of theology and pastoral care lose their orientation. Therefore, the adoption of the Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* set the direction towards God for all further resolutions of the Council.

The speed of preparation, discussion and voting on the liturgy renewal project at the Second Vatican Council indicates that the Constitution on the Holy Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium* was the fruit of a long process of maturity that began several decades before (GAILLARDÉTZ; CLIFFORD, 2013, p. 23; FIŠERIS, 2022, p. 15-17). In the 20th century there was a rising need for the renewal of the Church by returning to its origins (*ad fontes*). When Pope John XXIII announced the convocation of the Second Vatican Council on January 25, 1959, the Church had already been undergoing a renewal for several decades. It became clear that it was no longer possible to stay only with the theology and liturgy of the Middle Ages and that the new times could also make their contribution to the Christian life. The participants of the renewal set a goal — the active participation of the Christian people in the Church's liturgy (SIKORSKAS, 2011, p. 61). Pope John XXIII said during the Council that it was necessary to renew by recognising the signs of the times, by listening more to what was happening in the world, and to understand theology in the way made possible by the knowledge of our time. The word *aggiornamento*, meaning renewal, which sounded in the opening speech of the Holy Father, became the leitmotif of the entire Council. At the opening of the Council, John XXIII presented the general direction for the Council: due to the rapid changes in the world, the faith should speak "newly", more penetratingly, without any concessions or compromises while maintaining all the eternal content. The Pope wanted the Church to reflect on faith. From such a serious, deep reflection on faith, the relationship between the Church and the modern era, between Christianity and certain essential elements of modern thought, should have emerged in a new way, in order not to adapt, but to show our today's world, which tends to move away from God, the necessity of the Gospel, revealing its greatness and purity (BENEDIKTAS XVI, 2012a, p. 2).

Although December 4, 2023 marks 60 years since the adoption of the first document of the Second Vatican Council — the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium* — the implementation of the Council's resolutions is still relevant today. At the beginning of the Constitution, the goal of the Council is stated: to better adapt the liturgy to the requirements of our time, to take care of the renewal and promotion of the liturgy (SC,

n. 1). The reform of the liturgy was implemented for the sake of the people, so that they could better and more appropriately participate in the celebration of divine mysteries, in order to maintain a healthy tradition and pave the way for legitimate progress (PALIKŠA, 2013). Therefore, in order to daily strengthen the Christian life of the faithful, to reinforce everything that helps gather all people under the shelter of the Church, the Council, for a special reason, considered its task to take care of the renewal and promotion of the liturgy (SC, n. 1). The constitution contains instructions on what needs to be changed, but specific changes are not discussed. Pursuant to these guidelines, the rites of administering the sacraments were renewed after the Council in order to make their essence more understandable to the faithful.

Joseph Ratzinger — Benedict XVI — emphasized in his activities that the constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* needed to be constantly re-read. He proposed distinguishing two different levels running through each section of the document. First, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* develops principles that fundamentally affect the nature of the liturgy and its celebration and are of the highest authority. Second, based on these principles, the constitution provides normative indications for the practical renewal of the Roman Rite. These norms are more a product of their time than a principled provision. Concrete liturgical reforms were implemented after the Council. The forms of liturgical renewal established by the ecclesiastical authorities of that period are obligatory, but not identical to the Council. Therefore, even after sixty years, the text of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* needs to be contextualized once more, that is, re-read taking into account its influence on history and the current situation (KAZLAUSKAS, 2023, p. 18).

In order for the Christian nation to receive abundant graces in the liturgy, the Church seeks to implement the general renewal of the liturgy itself. “For the liturgy is made up of immutable elements divinely instituted, and of elements subject to change. These not only may but ought to be changed with the passage of time if they have suffered from the intrusion of anything out of harmony with the inner nature of the liturgy or have become unsuited to it” (SC, n. 21). The liturgy helps the believers to express in their lives and to reveal to others the mystery of Christ and the unique nature of the true Church, which is characterized by the fact that it is simultaneously human and divine, visible and endowed with an invisible reality, active and dedicated to contemplation, living in this world, but travelling (SC, n. 2). In the context of the renewal of the liturgy, one of the tasks of the Second Vatican Council was also to discover a new order for the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick (SC, n. 73), to review the number of anointings, what prayers are applied to these rites etc. The congregation turned back to the original evangelical practice, when Jesus showed his healing love to the sick so that they would recover. The Anointing of the Sick is no longer considered a

sacrament only for those on the brink of inevitable death. The Second Vatican Council took an important step to restore this sacrament to its original meaning, which we read about in the letter of James in the New Testament (Jas 5,14-17). The most important thing that influenced people's thinking was the change of the name of the sacrament to the Anointing of the Sick. There were both supporters and opponents of the reform in the debate over the proposed changes. The congregation rejected the medieval name of *the Last Anointing* and adopted a new one, *the Anointing of the Sick*. Therefore, it is administered when the believer faces even a slight danger of death due to illness or old age and is not limited to the practice when the person is already in the grip of death and life is about to end. Thus, in relation to the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, the Council declared the change of the name, the correct administration of the rite of the sacrament and the possibility of repeating the anointing in the course of the same illness.

The implementation of the themes of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* also concerns Church pastors and liturgical scholars. Today historical studies of liturgy and truths of theology are combined with the latest data of anthropology and other social sciences, so that the liturgy leads modern human being to a real experience of the mysteries of faith, which includes the whole human person in all dimensions. The Anointing of the Sick must not be considered a "lesser sacrament" compared to the others (BENEDIKTAS XVI, 2012b, n. 3). Attention to the sick and their pastoral care, on the one hand, is a sign of God's fondness for those who suffer, and, on the other hand, it also brings many spiritual benefits to priests and the entire Christian community, realizing that what is done to the least is done to Jesus himself (cf. Matt 25,40) (BENEDIKTAS XVI, 2012b, n. 3). "Wherefore the sacred Council judges that the following principles concerning the promotion and reform of the liturgy should be called to mind, and that practical norms should be established" (SC, n. 3). Thus, the Council made a decisive turn in the life and history of the Church, which remains relevant for today's Catholics, because 60 years after the publication of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, considering the frequency of the administration of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, it can be assumed that Christians do not sufficiently appreciate the significance of this sacrament and use it much less often than expected by the Catholic Church. One possible reason is that, even today, it is often referred to the outdated term *The Last Anointing*. Therefore, the research object of this article is the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick in the context of the Constitution on the Holy Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. The aim is to present the main highlights of the concept and celebration of this Sacrament, which were raised by the Second Vatican Council when renewing the liturgy. The goal is achieved through the following tasks: to review the fruits of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, emphasizing the anointing of the sick and not only of the dying people; to discuss the relationship

between the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick and the other sacraments, i.e., with the sacraments of Penance and Eucharist; and, finally, to present and explain the Church's regulations regarding the reception of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick according to the guidelines of the Second Vatican Council.

1 The fruits of the anointing of the sick, and not only of those at the point of death

“Extreme unction”, which may also and more fittingly be called “anointing of the sick”, is not a sacrament for those only who are at the point of death (SC, n. 73).

“I am the Lord who heals you” (Exod 15,26) are the words with which God introduces himself to the Israelites and which accompany humanity throughout the history of salvation. God acts as a healing God in human history, and this healing power of God was most manifested in the person of Jesus Christ. During his ministry, Jesus Christ met people suffering from diseases and healed them. Jesus's mission was continued by his disciples, who were given the gift of healing: “Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying, give without pay!” (Matt 10,8). Jesus Christ continues to work in the sacramental signs of the Church and works through them. Therefore, “the sacrament of the anointing of the sick gives a special grace to a Christian who is oppressed by a serious illness or old age” (CCC, n. 1527). The Anointing of the Sick allows a person who is sick or facing death to feel the healing power of the strengthening Lord (GAILLARDETZ; CLIFFORD, 2013, p. 41).

Therefore, going back to the origins, the main goal of the Second Vatican Council was to change the tendency to treat the Anointing of the Sick only as a sacrament for the dying. The meeting took a significant step in renewing this sacrament: the name *Last Anointing* is abandoned and the sacrament becomes *Anointing of the Sick*, emphasizing that this sacrament is in no way intended only for languishing and dying people, but for those who are sick and suffering. However, we have to admit that even after 60 years, believers still have a medieval image of this sacrament. There is still a widespread misconception that the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is only administered when a person is dying. For example, a situation is described when a daughter complains after her father's death: “Dad had been feeling quite well lately, he had recently returned home from the hospital and was trying not to succumb to the disease. How could we offer him the Last Anointing?” (PANEVĚŽIO, 2013), — asked the daughter when the priest inquired why her father died without the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. It means that today Catholics still

widely use the name of *the Last Anointing*, which indicates that the sick person will die after receiving this sacrament. Such a misunderstanding leads to the widespread practice of delaying receiving the Sacrament as long as possible.

Petrus Lombardus (1095-1160) introduced the name of *the last anointing* (*Extrema Unctio*). He presented the teaching about this sacrament and said that the Last Anointing is given at the end of a person's life. Thus, starting with the 12th century, the Anointing of the Sick has been called *the Last Anointing* (*Extrema Unctio*), and in the 14th century, this name of the sacrament finally came into force in the Catholic Church. St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) also contributed to this trend when describing this sacrament as a preparation for eternity, when the remnants of sins are removed, and the person is prepared for the glory of eternity. Thomas Aquinas emphasizes that the main effect of the Last Anointing is in the soul of the recipient, and that is receiving grace. Since grace is incompatible with either grave or venial sin, the Anointing itself removes them as long as there is such a possibility, and the person is not obstinately attached to the sin. By removing the remnants of sins, this Anointing strengthens the soul, preparing it for the last hours of life and the meeting with the Lord and His judgement (KIRKA, 2010, p. 31). With such a concept of the sacrament, the person's connection with the members of the Church community is lost during the illness. As a result, the visit of a priest to the sick believer becomes a rare phenomenon. And such a concept, which existed before the Second Vatican Council, is still present in people's thinking in the 21st century. Therefore, the catechesis of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is necessary today. In today's catechesis carried out by the Church, all the faithful must be invited to ask for this Sacrament when an illness occurs, and they must be encouraged not to delay receiving this sacrament. At the same time, the purpose and healing meaning of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick must be explained to all those who take care of the sick (LIGONIŲ PATEPIMO APEIGOS IR PASTORACIJOS GAIRĖS, 2005, n. 13).

Today's emphasis on the harmony between physical health and a wounded spirit can help to better understand the Anointing of the Sick as a sacrament of healing (BENEDIKTAS XVI, 2012b, p. 2). The faithful must be invited to properly experience the fruits of the Sacrament during illness. The teaching of the Church names four main fruits of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick as a true sacrament of the New Covenant: a special gift of the Holy Spirit, union with Christ's suffering, an ecclesial grace and preparation for the last journey (CCC, n. 1520-1523). All the mentioned fruits have deep meanings in surviving an illness, especially a serious illness.

A special gift of the Holy Spirit. "Those with diseases were pushing forward to touch him" (Mar 3,10). It is quite common for a person, who is undergoing

the suffering of the disease, to feel lonely and upset. It is not uncommon for a patient suffering from an incurable disease to lose optimism and hope, which is why the Church names the special gift of the Holy Spirit as one of God's graces for the sick. The Holy Spirit gives comfort, peace and courage to the sick, which is especially helpful in case of an illness. Likewise, the Holy Spirit renews trust in God, helps to fight despair, sadness, fear of death and temptations of the evil spirit. After receiving the Sacrament of the Sick, the person gains strength to overcome temptations. The Holy Spirit heals not only the soul of the sick, but strengthens the body as well, if it is God's will (CCC, n. 1520; LIGONIŲ PATEPIMO APEIGOS IR PASTORACIJOS GAIRĖS, 2005, n. 6; MARTINI, 1997, p. 44).

Through the gift of fortitude, the Holy Spirit frees the human heart from stagnation, uncertainty and fears that can prevent the word of the Lord from being fulfilled authentically and joyfully. The gift of fortitude is an aid in strengthening and breaking free from many obstacles. Sickness and suffering are therefore situations in which the gift of fortitude manifests itself in a special, exemplary way. This happens to those who are faced with particularly difficult and painful situations, serious diseases that shake their lives. Apostle Paul said: "For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength" (Phil 4,13). The Lord always strengthens a person and he never allows him to lack strength. The Lord does not try beyond man's ability. Ill people can sometimes be tempted to give in to despair, especially when faced with an incurable or serious illness. In these cases, the Holy Spirit is called upon to lift up the heart of the sufferer through the gift of fortitude and give them new strength in following Jesus (POP-IEŽIUS PRANCIŠKUS, 2015).

Union with the suffering of Christ. As Saint Pope John Paul II emphasizes, suffering is not alien to animals or plants either, but only humans ask "why?" when suffering (JONAS PAULIUS II, 1984, n. 9). Hence, only man searches for the deepest meaning of suffering. Christian academician and apologist Clive Staples Lewis states that there is a great deal of suffering in the world caused by the irresponsible behaviour of human being, but "there still remains much suffering that cannot be explained by human intervention" (LEWIS, 2006, p. 12). So, it is very important to render meaning to one's suffering. "Suffering somehow ceases to be suffering the moment it finds meaning – the meaning of the victim" (FRANKL, 2009, p. 133). The sick is searching for that meaning – it is important for them to understand *why* they were struck by a serious illness and *why* they have to face death. Therefore, the Church uniquely emphasizes the meaning of human suffering in the suffering Jesus: "Man is healed not by avoiding suffering or by running away from it, but by the ability to accept suffering, grow through it and find meaning in it, uniting with Christ, who suffered with infinite love" (BENEDICT XVI, 2008, n. 37). Through suffering, Jesus wins Redemption and thus exalts human suffering and

raises it to the level of Redemption — every person can now become a participant in Christ's suffering through their own suffering (JONAS PAULIUS II, 1984, n. 19; CCC, n. 1521; POPIEŽIŠKOJI SVEIKATOS APSAUGOS DARBUOTOJŲ PASTORACIJOS TARYBA, 1997, n. 111). The sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick unites the person with the suffering of Christ — “in a sense, they are sanctified to bear fruit by suffering in the same way as the Saviour suffered in redeeming us” (CCC, n. 1521). Through the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, a suffering person is directed towards suffering Christ, who also suffered, and His suffering was purposeful — Christ sacrificed Himself to save humanity. Thus, the suffering of the sick now acquires a new meaning — “becomes a part of the saving work of Jesus” (RAMONAS, 2006, p. 156). Having experienced the strengthening of divine grace during the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick and bearing the trials and difficulties arising from the illness, uniting with the suffering Christ, the sick also witness to those around them the impact of the Gospel message and invite them to fully devote themselves to it (RAGAIŠIS, 2017, p. 166).

The Second Vatican Council declared that with the holy Anointing of the Sick and the prayers of priests, the whole Church entrusts the sick persons to the suffering and exalted Lord to ease their suffering and heal them (cf. Jas 5,14-16); it encourages them to freely connect with Christ's suffering and death (cf. Rom 8,17; Col 1,24; 2 Tim 2,11-12; 1 Pet 4,13) and thereby to benefit God's people (LG, n. 11). Here, along with the diverse treatment of the person, the ideas are developed that the celebration of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is a specific form of encounter with Christ, because it unites with the suffering Lord.

Ecclesiastical grace. After the Second Vatican Council, the communal feature of the celebration of the sacraments has been emphasized. The sacrament of the anointing of the sick, like the other sacraments, has a communal character. This is especially evident when this Sacrament is offered during the celebration of the Eucharist, after the Gospel. The communal character does not disappear even when providing the services in a hospital ward to many patients or to one patient. The offering of the sacrament outside of Holy Mass must bring together a small community so that they can not only accompany the sick person with their faith and prayers, but also actively get involved and participate in the rites. The sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick provides the intercession of the Church itself: the sick person, “for his part, through the grace of this sacrament, contributes to the sanctification of the Church and to the good of all men for whom the Church suffers and offers herself through Christ to God the Father” (CCC, n. 1522). Following the example of Jesus, the Church maintains a close relationship with the sick, thus showing that both God and the community do not leave the sick alone in their suffering. At all times there has been a strong sense of unity among the members of the Church. Apostle

Paul also affirms this concept: “If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it” (1 Cor 12,26). Thus, the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick shows that a member of the Church who suffers from an illness is not alone — the whole community is with him; moreover, the sick, who receive this sacrament and thus voluntarily join Christ’s suffering and death, serve the well-being of the Church, whereas the Church intercedes for the sick person through the communion of saints by offering this sacrament (CCC, n. 1522).

“God, however, does not make men holy and save them merely as individuals, without bond or link between one another. Rather has it pleased Him to bring men together as one people, a people which acknowledges Him in truth and serves Him in holiness” (LG, n. 9). The prayer of the priest and the members of the community of believers must help a Christian to live through suffering and illness without losing hope of health, and, if it were God’s will, to accept death in a Christian way. Illness and the suffering it causes have always been one of the most difficult trials in human life (MARTINI, 1997, p. 44). A person bound by illness feels “his powerlessness, his limitations, and his finitude” (CCC, n. 1500). Therefore, people who show attention or concern for the sick are witnesses and providers of God’s grace to each other in their relationships. Anointing in the name of the Lord renders sanctifying grace — this is the first effect experienced by the recipient of the sacrament. Anointing makes it possible to sanctify a person suffering from an illness and it transforms the illness into salvation for the benefit of that person, others and the Church. It is a personalized gift of salvation to the sick. The anointing of the sick is liberation: “If he has committed sins, he will be forgiven” (Jas 5,15) says the letter of James. In this way, the Sacrament of the Sick, having a connection with another healing sacrament — Penance — restores the connection interrupted or complicated by sin or illness not only with God, but also with the community of believers (RAGAIŠIS, 2017, p. 165).

Preparation for the final journey. The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is offered to all those suffering from a serious illness or disability, but, according to the teaching of the Catholic Church, this sacrament is mostly intended for those who have been defeated by illness or old age and are preparing for death. The Anointing of the Sick completes what Baptism began: it makes us similar to dead and risen Christ. It completes the holy anointings, which mark the entire life of a Christian: the Baptismal anointing seals a new life in us while the anointing of Confirmation strengthens us for the struggles of this life. The Anointing of the Sick fortifies the end of our earthly life like a solid rampart for the final struggles before entering the Father’s house (CCC, n. 1523). The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick provides the dying person with courage and hope, prevents them from feeling alone and strengthens their faith in case it has weakened due to the sufferings of the disease. The sacrament saves from suffering, loneliness,

sadness, guilt, fear of death and rebellion against God (RAMONAS, 2006, p. 163). It is important to realize that this sacrament not only prepares for the last journey, but also has a positive effect on both body and soul. The person is reconciled with God, i.e., is forgiven of sins that damage their relationship with God. For those who are preparing to leave this life, the Church, in addition to the Anointing of the Sick, also provides the Eucharist as Viatica — food for the journey (from Latin *viaticum* — provision for the journey). Receiving the Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ on the way to the Father is especially meaningful and important, because it is the seed of the eternal life that resurrects us.

2 Sacrament of the Sick in connection with other sacraments

In addition to the separate rites for anointing of the sick and for viaticum, a continuous rite shall be prepared according to which the sick man is anointed after he has made his confession and before he receives viaticum (SC, n. 74).

The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is particularly closely related to the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist. The Church mandates that if a person has committed grievous sins, first the Sacrament of Reconciliation must be administered and, after the Anointing of the Sick, — the Sacrament of the Eucharist. As the paschal sacrament of Jesus, the Eucharist must always be the last sacrament to complete the journey of earthly life (CCC, n. 1517). Thus, the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is administered in the context of two sacraments: the sick is anointed after the Sacrament of Penance before receiving Communion.

In the Epistle of James, which describes the practice of the Anointing of the Sick, it is indicated that the anointing is related to Repentance. The Council of Trent, emphasizing the existing practice, planned to continue administering the Sacrament of Anointing of the sick after the Sacramental Confession, but before receiving the Holy Communion (DRZYŻDŹYK, 2015, p. 13-14). In his 20th message for the World Day of the Sick, Pope Benedict XVI emphasized the “sacraments of healing”, i.e., “the sacraments of Penance and Anointing of the Sick, which are automatically completed by the Eucharistic Communion” (BENEDIKTAS XVI, 2012b, p. 2).

2.1 Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick and Penance

Before the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, the sacrament of Penance is offered, by which sins are forgiven and reconciliation both with God and with other people is granted. Repentance frees the person from sins, while the Anointing of the Sick strengthens the body and soul. Therefore,

the three main fruits of the sacrament of Penance can positively affect the sick person's condition:

Reconciliation with God. By sinning, the person turns away from God and loses His friendship, and with the sacrament of Penance, that friendship is restored, and believers are given the opportunity to reconcile with God. Through this sacrament, the believer confesses his sins and receives God's forgiveness. This is an important way to revive faith and a closer relationship with God.

Reconciliation with the Church. It is important to reconcile not only with God, but also with the Church. Because of the sins of one member, the whole Church suffers, so the sacrament of Penance is necessary to strengthen the church community. The sacrament of Penance is one of the healing sacraments through which believers can be reconciled with the Church. During this sacrament, the believer meets the priest who represents the Church, confesses his sins, receives forgiveness and encouragement for his future life. This is how the relationship with the Church is restored through the sacrament of Penance.

Judgement is experienced in advance. Penance is like God's judgement, which the person will be subjected to after the end of his earthly life. Everyone has the right here and now to choose life or death. The judgement experienced in advance is one of the aspects of the sacrament of Penance, which helps the faithful to better understand their sins, review their lifestyle and understand what needs to be corrected. Thus, the judgement that is experienced in advance helps believers to achieve the best possible outcome. Through the sacrament of Penance, more peace and confidence are achieved when confessing sins to the priest (CCC, n. 1468-1470).

In the Church and through the Church, sacramental forgiveness of sins is obtained and thus reconciliation with God, neighbour and oneself is realized. The reconciliation realized here eliminates the division caused by the sin and helps to create justice and peace in the world. Like sin and guilt, repentance has a distinct social and ecclesiological character. Through baptism, we have been incorporated into the Church, the "mysterious body" of which Christ is the head. We remain members of this living organism even when the sin outwardly separates us from it. The Church is also active in the process of our reconciliation with God. In the constitution of the Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, it is said: "Those who approach the sacrament of Penance obtain pardon from the mercy of God for the offence committed against Him and are at the same time reconciled with the Church, which they have wounded by their sins, and which by charity, example, and prayer seeks their conversion" (LG, n. 11). Through the Church's preaching and activities in history, Jesus's call to conversion is conveyed. The Church here acts as a path leading to a reconciled relationship between God and man and among people. Through

it, God seeks to draw mankind, as well as the entire universe, to Himself in a saving and redemptive way, to call them to an all-encompassing and lasting communion (RAGAIŠIS, 2010, p. 57).

With grave sin, a person breaks the covenant with God accepted at Baptism and thus breaks the bond of faith and loyalty with Him. Hence, the relationship between God and man is in crisis. Therefore, during the sacrament of Penance, the covenant bond is renewed and the broken relationship between God and man is restored. A sick believer celebrates reconciliation, which brings peace of mind. Naming the sin and admitting it reveals the truth about oneself. This is the hour of truth, and this is already the first step towards changing the situation. Discovered and accepted, this truth helps to receive Lord's forgiveness. Therefore, it can be said that this dialogue, which leads to the knowledge of the truth, is also of a therapeutic nature (SKINKAITIS, 2006, p. 43).

As for the sick, the sacrament of Penance may become the last chance to reconcile with God and the Church. After making a confession, the dying person gets rid of the evil that prevents him from entering the Kingdom of Heaven. In case of an illness, Reconciliation can provide peace and relief and thus promote the healing of the body, and in the case of death, the Sacrament of Penance gives peace of the heart and allows the person to properly prepare to walk towards the Father's house. Reconciliation must become a reminder that God always loves us. It can be said that this is a tangible sign that God does not turn away from man even when he sins. The Lord wants to help reconcile with Him and with other people and to correct the consequences of sin. During the Liturgy of Reconciliation, the sinner merges with the burden of sins assumed by Christ and dies together with Him and in Him, in order to later participate with Him and in Him in the resurrection, by which the Father frees his Son and all those who are with him and in him (SKINKAITIS, 2006, p. 46). By destroying guilt and its effects, repentance provides the person with new creative powers that lie within their spirit and which guilt does not allow to manifest. Without the feeling of guilt, creative forces come to life, fill the person, inspire them for new quests, releasing the reservoirs of latent and unused forces within them. Thus, repentance is the source of human creativity, activity and joy. Repentance reveals the source of evil in a person – the sin and destroys it by freeing the person from its further action and thus protecting their personality from decay (RAMONAS; STIRBYTĖ, 2012, p. 77). Thus, through the sacrament of Penance, God resurrects a believer whose body is sick or dying from spiritual death.

2.2 Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick and the Eucharist

In no other sacrament are Easter, the Eucharist, the fullness of the Christian life and eschatology more closely connected than in the Anointing of the

Sick. The Eucharist is the most important and significant sacrament in the life of a Christian. By instituting the Eucharist, Jesus makes this sacrificial act permanent. By giving Himself in the form of wine and bread, He runs ahead of His death and resurrection. Therefore, the Eucharist involves believers in the act of Christ's sacrifice, through the Eucharist we unite not only with Jesus, but also with other Christians (BENEDIKTAS XVI, 2006, n. 13-14). According to Franciscan Capuchin Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa, preacher of the Papal Household, participation in the Eucharist is participation in one's own death and union with Christ Himself (CANTALAMESSA, 1999, p. 145). Jesus dies and rises to eternal life, thus giving everyone the opportunity to be saved and resurrected for eternity. After the Easter event of Jesus Christ, "not only the name of death changes, but also its nature" (CANTALAMESSA, 1999, p. 132). Now human death becomes very different. In ancient cultures, death was associated with evil, pain and fear – death ends a person's life by committing them to non-being. The Easter event of Christ defeats death and its consequences, i.e., the finitude of life. Thus, if until now death was the end of human life, Jesus gives life forever through his death and resurrection. From now on, man is invited to eternal life and can celebrate the victory over death together with Christ. Death loses its destructive power. Therefore, the First Letter to the Corinthians asks unambiguously: "Where, O death, is your victory?" Where is your sting, death?!" (1 Cor 15,55). These questions do not seek to extract the answer from death itself – they are man's triumphant shouts against death. This is the attitude of a believer in the face of death after receiving the Sacrament of the Anointing of the sick and, at the same time, Jesus Himself in the Communion. Therefore, the Catholic Church offers to those who are about to leave this life, together with the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick, the Sacrament of the Eucharist (in the form of bread and wine), whose reception "has a particular significance and importance" (CCC, n. 1524). The Eucharist is the seed of eternal life and the resurrecting power: the sacrament of dead and risen Christ – the Eucharist now becomes the sacrament of the transition from death to life: "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day" (Jn 6,54).

The Anointing of the Sick is administered before receiving Communion, so now the last sacrament is the Viatic – Communion as food for the journey. The sick receives Christ in the Eucharist, the dead and risen eternally living God who opens the blessed eternity. The Eucharist is not only the comforting presence of Christ with the sick, but also the real hope and beginning of resurrection. Therefore, celebrating the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick and giving Communion to the sick should not cause fear or panic, on the contrary, it should give hope, Christian joy and peace (RAMONAS, 2006, p. 161; RAGAIŠIS, 2012, p. 35). Communion received via the Viatic should be seen as an extraordinary sign – participation in the mystery of the Lord's death and ascension to the Father, which is cel-

ebredated in the sacrifice of the Holy Mass (LIGONIŲ PATEPIMO APEIGOS IR PASTORACIJOS GAIRĖS, 2005, n. 26).

In the face of death, no matter where it comes from, all the faithful are invited to receive the Holy Communion. This invitation to receive the Viatic applies to all baptized persons who can receive Holy Communion. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure that there is no delay with this sacrament and that the sick receive it while being conscious. In addition, before accepting the Viatic, the believer should renew the faith professed in Baptism, through which he became a child of God and a sharer of the promise of eternal life (LIGONIŲ PATEPIMO APEIGOS IR PASTORACIJOS GAIRĖS, 2005, n. 27-28). In this way, the sick person, having reconciled with God and others through the Sacrament of Penance, united with the suffering Christ through the Anointing of the Sick, having received Communion as a Viatic and ready to depart for the Eternal Life, fulfils the vocation of a Christian in this life — to prepare to meet the Lord in eternity.

The sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick reflects the essence of the Christian message of salvation, that the whole person, body and soul, is called to salvation. This sacrament extends God's mercy in Christ and works through the Church, which entrusts its believers to the Lord, praying for intercession and entrusting them to the grace of healing. In the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, Christ was present in two forms — eucharistic and cosmic: one accompanies, the other welcomes, and in this way time and eternity meet. Thus, if the circumstances require, the Sacrament of Penance may be given before the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, and the Sacrament of the Eucharist afterwards. The Eucharist should always be the last sacrament of the earthly journey, *Viaticum* — the food of the journey for the transition to the eternal life (CCC, n. 1517). The Eucharist is not only the comforting presence of Christ, but also the real beginning of resurrection.

3 Church regulations regarding recipients of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick

Hence, as soon as any one of the faithful begins to be in danger of death from illness or old age, the fitting time for him to receive this sacrament has certainly already arrived (SC, n. 73).

The number of the anointings is to be adapted to the occasion, and the prayers which belong to the rite of anointing are to be revised so as to correspond with the varying conditions of the sick who receive the sacrament (SC, n. 75).

Theological and liturgical thoughts on the renewal of the liturgy in the decisions of the Second Vatican Council influenced the preparation and publication of further new documents. On November 30, 1972, Pope Paul

VI promulgated the Apostolic Constitution *Sacram Unctione Infirmorum* (Apostolic Constitution of Pope Paul VI *Sacram Unctione Infirmorum* on the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick), which contains the teaching of the Second Vatican Council on the issue of Anointing the Sick (PAUL VI, 1972). In 1972, during the implementation of the liturgical reforms specified by the Council, *Rite of Anointing of the Sick and Their Spiritual Care (Ordo Unctionis Infirmorum Eorumque Spiritualis Curæ)* was published. The document talks about visiting the sick and receiving Communion, rites of the Anointing of the Sick are presented, administration of the Anointing of the Sick and other sacraments to a person who is close to death is discussed as well as the accompaniment of the dying and the Viatic, and the texts of the rites of the Anointing of the Sick are presented.

The New Testament Epistle of James describes the practice of Anointing the Sick at the dawn of Christianity.

Is anyone among you ill? Let him send for the rulers of the church; and let them say prayers over him, putting oil on him in the name of the Lord. And by the prayer of faith the man who is ill will be made well, and he will be lifted up by the Lord, and for any sin which he has committed he will have forgiveness. So then, make a statement of your sins to one another, and say prayers for one another so that you may be done well. The prayer of a good man is full of power in its working (Jas 5,14-17).

The letter of James mentions the elders who pray for the sick. This is one of the most natural ways of using the prayer to ask for miracles or forgiveness of sins. The early Church gives a new meaning to the Old Testament anointing of the sick, which is an extension of the Paschal Mystery. The anointing itself is a cure for the body and soul, because the disease of the body also weakens the spiritual powers of the soul (RAMONAS, 2006, p. 155; PAULAUSKAS, 2001, p. 60). At the same time, this anointing contains an exorcistic action, “because the apostles heal the sick, calling for conversion and casting out demons. This action is performed by the official representatives of the Church, the elders, and has a healing effect, which is mentioned in the Gospel of Mark: “They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them” (Mar 6,13). The elders do this “in the name of the Lord”, which testifies that they do not serve the sick by their own strength and power, but by the power of the Lord, which will “raise them up” (Jas 5,15). It expresses physical and spiritual healing, because “If they have sinned, they will be forgiven” (Jas 5,15).

The letter of James does not indicate for which case of illness the elders of the Church are called to the sick person. We see that there is no distinction here between the human body and the soul. In the letter of James, the object of the rite of anointing is a specific sick person, and the effect of the anointing is the restoration of body and soul. James says that the sick should be prayed for and anointed. It relieves the suffering of illness and

saves the sick. Therefore, the Second Vatican Council indicated that the time to receive the Anointing of the Sick is when the believer is in danger of death due to illness or old age (SC, n. 73). This provision is established by *the Guidelines for the Anointing of the Sick and Pastoral Care*, repeating the idea that the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is given to every believer whose health has seriously deteriorated due to illness or old age (LIGONIŲ PATEPIMO APEIGOS IR PASTORACIJOS GAIRĖS, 2005, no. 8). This means that anyone who is sick can ask for this sacrament in order to recover, regain health or be protected from trials caused by the illness, and when the believer is in danger of death due to physical weakness or old age (CCC, n. 1514). Of course, the recipient of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick must be baptized. The sacrament of baptism is the “gateway” to other sacraments, so unbaptized people do not receive the Anointing of the Sick (WOESTMAN, 1996, p. 333).

The Sacrament of the Sick must be administered to the person, even if his consciousness is in doubt. The Anointing of the Sick must be given to the people who have asked for it while conscious, or have asked indirectly, or with the assumption that they would ask if they were conscious (CIC, can. 1005-1007). However, if the person is unconscious, the Anointing of the Sick may not be administered for the following reasons, i.e., the sacrament is not administered to the person who has publicly and openly demonstrated the committed sin and has not repented for it; or to somebody who, being conscious, has publicly declared unwillingness to receive the sacraments. Of course, if a public sinner still repents and admits the sins and confesses them, then the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick might be administered. Thus, believers who have lost consciousness or clarity of mind are anointed if it is implied or known that they would want it.

The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick must be given to the sick even without knowing whether the illness is really serious. If the patient recovers after receiving the anointing, he can receive this sacrament again in case of a serious illness. During the same illness, the sacrament can be repeated if the illness worsens. The sacrament can be repeated when a person’s condition improves and then worsens again, so, even in the case of the same illness, the sacrament can be administered several times. It means that the anointing can be repeated if the patient was cured after the Anointing of the Sick, but got sick again, or if he felt significantly worse while suffering from the same disease. Relatives and care providers have the duty to inform the priest in advance in case of worsening of the illness, and to tactfully offer and advise the patient to receive the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.

This sacrament can always be received by persons before a serious operation. The Fathers of the Congregation proposed to provide for an opportunity to administer this sacrament to all who expect a major surgical intervention, that is, in the field of heart surgery, neurosurgery, and the like. Referring

to the passage from the letter of James “and the Lord will raise them up” (Jas 5,15), it is explained that these words should also encompass the aspect of healing the physical body (DRZYŹDŹYK, 2015, p. 28).

The Anointing of the Sick is a sacrament not only for those for whom death is right here. Seriously ill children are anointed if they understand the essence and benefits of this sacrament, that the anointing can strengthen them and allow them to recover their strength.

The Catholic Church also recommends that the elderly receive the Sacrament of the Sick. Elderly people are anointed when their strength weakens. They are not required to wait for any definite illness. The Sacrament of Anointing can be administered to old people even when they are not suffering from any serious illness. The right time to receive the sacrament has definitely come when the believer is in danger of death due to physical weakness or old age (CCC, n. 1515). The deceased are not anointed, but only prayed for.

The Second Vatican Council, in order to better express the meaning of the Anointing of the Sick, decided not to limit the number of anointings that a sick person can receive, but to leave the decision to the circumstances. We can find such a reference in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* of the Second Vatican Council (1963, n. 75). The Code of Canon Law emphasizes that the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick can be repeated if the person’s health improves after receiving this sacrament, but later he falls ill again, or, in case of the same illness, if the condition worsens (CIC, can. 1004). Thus, the repetition of the Sacrament of the Sick is always possible if the person recovered strength after receiving the sacrament, but after some time he relapsed again. The sacrament can also be repeated when the danger to life is continuing for a long time. However, it is not possible to repeat the anointing for persons whose condition is stable and unchanging, or to administer the anointing regularly on a weekly, monthly or similar basis.

Those who accept the Anointing of the Sick must accept Jesus as their Lord, who has power over human life and death. Incarnate, suffering, dead and resurrected Christ comes to the sick person during the Anointing with holy oils. Therefore, the sick person to whom Christ comes can have the hope of resurrection and eternal life. Another important point in the celebration of the Anointing is that the sick person should be an active receiver through his desire, not only seeking health, according to God’s will, but also witnessing to the world the whole human life filled with faith.

Conclusion

This article discusses the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick in the perspective of the Second Vatican Council’s Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. The ideas expressed at the Second Vatican

Council were set out in sixteen documents, reflecting on the role of the Church in the modern world, which became a new norm for the Catholic Church's life. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium* was the first document discussed by the Council and one of the first to be published at the end of the second session of the Council on December 4, 1963. This constitution reflected the working direction of the Council established by Pope John XXIII — to modernize (*aggiornamento*) the Church's life, while maintaining fidelity to tradition. The Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* clearly shows that the Second Vatican Council is not a thing of the past, not of history, but of the present, because the tasks of renewing the liturgy it raised are immutable, since the essential tasks of this Constitution are intended for every believer at every moment of history.

The Second Vatican Council took a very important and major step in renewing the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. The name *Last Anointing* was abandoned, and the sacrament became *the Anointing of the Sick*, emphasizing that this sacrament is in no way intended only for the dying, but for those who are suffering and sick. The harmony between the physical health of the human body and the wounded spirit should help to better understand the Anointing of the Sick as a holistic sacrament of personal healing.

In today's catechesis carried out by the Church, all the faithful must be invited to ask for the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, when an illness occurs, and they must be encouraged not to delay receiving this sacrament. The faithful must be invited to properly experience the fruits of the Sacrament during illness. The teaching of the Church names four main fruits of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick: special gift of the Holy Spirit, union with Christ's suffering, an ecclesial grace and preparation for the last journey.

The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is closely related to the other sacraments, i.e., it is in close union to the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist. If the ill person has serious sins, before receiving the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, the Sacrament of Penance should be celebrated, and after the Anointing of the Sick — the Sacrament of the Eucharist. As the paschal sacrament of Jesus, the Eucharist must always be the last sacrament received by a Christian to complete the journey of earthly life. Thus, the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is administered in the context of two sacraments: the sick is anointed after the Sacrament of Penance before receiving Communion.

The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is administered to every believer whose health is seriously impaired due to illness or old age, and not only in the face of death. This sacrament can be requested by anyone who is sick in order to be healed, to regain health or to be protected from the trials caused by the disease, and when the believer is in danger of death

due to physical weakness or old age. The Second Vatican Council, in order to better express the meaning of the Anointing of the Sick, decided not to limit the number of anointings that a sick person can receive, but to leave the decision to the circumstances.

The renewal of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick in the perspective of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium* shows that the Church must always be *ecclesia semper reformanda*. The permanent renewal taking place in the Church leads the Church to an active future.

Acronyms

SC = Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*

LG = Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*

CIC = *CODEX IURIS CANONICI*

CCC = Catechism of the Catholic Church

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