

Our Gospel passage today is one of the options that a priest can read before administering the sacrament of the anointing of the sick. It's probably the one that I tend to read the most. I find these passages quite fitting because you don't have to tell the sick or those who are dying the burden of their condition. They know it firsthand.

Many times before I anoint someone, I will tell them that they are going to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit so that Jesus will be close to them and strengthen them in their suffering.

One of the great dangers that sickness brings, of course, is the temptation to lose hope or to feel that God has abandoned them.

Now every once a while a priest may ask someone if they want to be anointed where it seems warranted – say because their health has declined or they are going in for a major surgery – and the person will give that look like, "Oh my gosh, is it that bad? Am I dying?" I have to assure them that this sacrament is not just for those on the point of death.

In fact, here is what the Catechism says about the anointing of the sick, *"The Anointing of the Sick is not a sacrament for those only who are at the point of death. Hence, as soon as anyone of the faithful begins to be in danger of death from sickness or old age, the fitting time for him to receive this sacrament has certainly already arrived."* (CCC 1514) Granted, there can be abuses on the other end like someone who stubs their toe or who has a hangnail and thinks that they need to be anointed.

The idea is that if your health begins to decline because of sickness or old age, it is a fitting time to receive the sacrament. Why is that? Because Jesus wants to give the sick person "rest" who is laboring and burdened by his or her sickness. Notice that the rest isn't promised for only for the next life. Instead, we are able to receive that rest *now* when we come to Jesus.

For us, it is extremely comforting knowing that whether we are sick or healthy, Jesus promises us rest – a rest that all of our hearts hunger for. And He promises it now – in the present – if we come to him – whether it's in prayer or in receiving the sacraments such as the Eucharist or the anointing of the sick. *"Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest."*