

Sacraments of Healing: The Church has two Sacraments of Healing. Of course, the Sacrament of Penance is an encounter with the Lord's mercy and a healing of heart and soul. We believe in the transforming power of grace. Through frequent confession, the soul is healed and the person is strengthened to live in holiness and virtue. It helps one to break the cycle of sin. The first step in the Sacrament of Penance is an examination of conscience and the acknowledgement of sin. Contrition includes the sorrow for one's sin and the intention to avoid sin in the future. The ministry of reconciliation has been entrusted to the Church through the priesthood. After the resurrection, Jesus said to His apostles, "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained." [Jn. 20:22-23] In general there are many forms of penance in the Christian life such as fasting, prayer and almsgiving, efforts to reconcile with one's neighbor, fraternal correction, examination of conscience, acceptance of suffering, endurance in persecution, carrying one's cross, act of worship and devotion & pilgrimages. The effects of penance include: reconciliation with God and the Church, remission of eternal punishment, peace and serenity of conscience, & strength of the spirit for the struggle to live in holiness and virtue.

I regularly administer the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. The Lord Jesus is our Divine Physician. Sometimes, it is prior to surgery and sometimes it is near the end of one's life. Recall that during His public ministry, the Lord forgave the sins of the paralytic and also restored him to bodily health [Matt. 9:2-8] There is a link between bodily and spiritual health. The will of the Lord is that His healing ministry continues in the Church through His priests. In the sacrament of Anointing of the Sick, there is a conferral of grace and a prayer for the healing of body and soul. There are times when a spiritual healing may actually be much more profound than a physical healing. Our illnesses or sufferings may be a sharing in the cross of Christ. A Scriptural basis for the Sacrament of Anointing is the following: "Is anyone among you suffering? He should pray. Is anyone in good spirits? He should sing praise. Is anyone among you sick? He should summon the presbyters of the church, and they should pray over him and anoint (him) with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up. If he has committed any sins, he will be forgiven." [James 5:13-15] The oil that is used for the Sacrament of Anointing is blessed in the Cathedral by the bishop during the Chrism Mass during Holy Week. The grace of the sacrament has the following effects: the uniting of the sick person to the passion of Christ, the strengthening, peace, and courage to endure in a Christian manner the sufferings of illness or old age, the forgiveness of sins, the restoration of health, if it is conducive to the salvation of his soul, & the preparation for the passing of this life to eternal life. [Catechism 1532] The Church teaches that anyone who is preparing for surgery should request the Sacrament of Anointing. The sacrament is always appropriate for: chronic pain, a serious or terminal illness, a mental illness or for one who is advanced in years.