

bound will often value other forms of pastoral care – perhaps the opportunity of a visit and a chat and cup of tea with another parishioner, perhaps some help with shopping or the care of the garden. Organisations such as the Society of St Vincent de Paul, Knight of St Columba and Legion of Mary have a proud tradition of offering this sort of support.

### *If someone is seriously ill and in hospital or a nursing home*

In addition to the points noted above:

It is important that any desire to see a Catholic chaplain is made known to the administrators of the hospital/nursing home. Current regulations mean that this information cannot be given by the hospital/nursing home to a chaplain without the explicit permission of the patient. This is a matter that should be addressed as part of the admission procedures, but if it has been overlooked at that time it can be dealt with later.

In a hospital the ministering of the sacraments (e.g. Holy Communion, Penance or Anointing of the Sick) is the responsibility of the chaplain. Ministers from elsewhere (priests or commissioned ministers of Holy Communion) should ask permission of the chaplain before agreeing to celebrate the sacramental rites.

### *If someone is dying*

In many cases, by the time death is imminent the sick person will have received

the sacrament of Anointing several times and will have been receiving Holy Communion weekly. So no longer do the ‘Last Rites’ have the same significance they had previously. That said the Church urges that those who are dying should receive Holy Communion as viaticum, and this will often be accompanied by a final celebration of Penance and Anointing of the Sick. Viaticum, food for the journey, may be received more than once, according to the needs of the dying person.

The Church’s ritual books, *Pastoral Care of the Sick* and *In Sure and Certain Hope*, contain a selection of prayers and readings both for the Commendation of the Dying and for Prayers after Death.



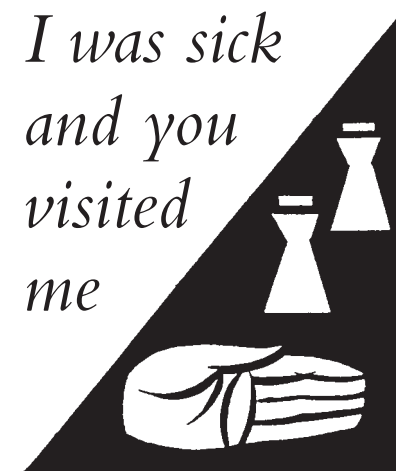
**J**esus our Lord,  
we ask you to have mercy  
on all who are sick.  
Give them your strength and love,  
and help them to carry this cross with faith.  
May their sufferings be one with yours,  
overcome the power of evil,  
and lead others to our Father in heaven.  
Lord Jesus, hear our prayer,  
for you are Lord for ever and ever.  
Amen.

**Liturgy  
Office**  
ENGLAND  
& WALES

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## WHEN SOMEONE IS ILL

*I was sick  
and you  
visited  
me*



*It is God who forgives all your guilt,  
who heals every ill everyone of your ills,  
who redeems your life from the grave,  
who crowns you with love and compassion.*

Psalm 102

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A guide to Pastoral Care of the Sick

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## Pastoral Care of the Sick

The sickness and incapacity of any member of the Church is not a matter only of private interest. The Church is the Body of Christ and we are all members of that Body:

*If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured all rejoice together with it.'*

I Corinthians 12.26

At the same time people have a right to a certain amount of privacy. It will always be a matter for each person concerned to agree to what and how information about their condition is made available to, for example, the Parish priest and how widely that information might be shared – for example in public prayers in the parish.

The Church desires to accompany any of her members through the trials of sickness with the comfort and encouragement that can be offered by prayer and the sacraments. Three sacraments in particular are regularly celebrated with the sick:

- The sacrament of **Anointing of the Sick**. This sacrament was formerly known as Extreme Unction and celebrated as close as possible to the time of death, but now a sacrament which is celebrated as soon as serious illness begins and repeated as necessary during the illness
- The sacrament of **Penance**. Often the experience of serious illness, as well as the experience of having time on

one's hands means that people have the opportunity to reflect on their lives. Sometimes this will encourage them to seek the forgiveness of God for what has been sinful in their lives, and to know his faithfulness and mercy in the celebration of this sacrament

- The sacrament of the **Eucharist**. Sometimes Mass might be celebrated in the home of the sick person. More commonly Holy Communion will be brought from the parish celebration of Mass and ministered to the sick person (and sometimes also to Catholic members of the family or friends) by the priest or commissioned ministers of Holy Communion.

Precisely how the priest and the parish will respond to the sickness of any member of the parish will depend on the resources they have to draw on, and the circumstances of the person concerned. However the following notes will give a guide.

### *If someone is seriously ill but can confidently expect to be well within two or three weeks*

Ask for prayers to be said for them. The parish may have the practice of including the names of sick people in the Prayer of the Faithful (Bidding Prayers) or have a Prayer Requests board in the church.

The priest may be able to visit, but more commonly visits will be paid by the sick

person's personal friends within the community.

If it is not possible for the person to attend Sunday Mass then a request may be made for Holy Communion to be brought to their home. For someone who has had the practice of taking part in daily Mass arrangements for more frequent reception of Holy Communion at home might also be possible

### *If someone is seriously ill and/or is housebound for more than two or three weeks*

In addition to the points noted above:

The Sacrament of the **Anointing of the Sick** is a sacrament for anyone whose health is seriously impaired, not only for the dying. It is a sacrament that is commonly ministered a number of times during an illness, sometimes because the illness worsens, or because the sick person would benefit from the spiritual encouragement it gives them.

The Sacrament of **Penance** (Confession/Reconciliation) can be celebrated in the home. The experience of sickness can often prompt in the person who is incapacitated the desire to make confession and receive absolution. The topic will often be best first raised by the priest during his visit, rather than by friends or family members.

In addition to the need for the sacraments and prayer, someone who is ill and house-