TREATISE VIII

**Extreme Unction**

This treatise is divided into three chapters : I. the nature of the sacra of Extreme Unction ; 2. its effects ; 3. the subject and minister sacrament.

CHAPTER I. THE NATURE OF EXTREME UNCTION

798. DEFINITION. *Extreme Unction is a sacrament of the New Law through which by means of anointing with blessed oil and the prayer of the spiritual health and sometimes bodily health are conferred on a man who is seriously ill and capable of grave sin.*

This definition will be clarified in the course of further discussion on the matter, form, effects, subject and minister of the sacrament.

THE REMOTE MATTER required for the *validity* of the sacrament is olive oil (O.I.) specially blessed; the ordinary minister for the blessing of this oil is a bishop, the extraordinary minister any priest delegated by the Supreme Pontiff (c. 945).In the Greek Church all priestspossess this delegation tacitly.

The remote matter required for *lawfulness* in ordinary cases is eil which has been blessed *a)* in the same year in which it is used, *b)* by the bishop of the diocese (or, if the see is vacant, by the bishop of a neigh­bouring diocese).

Old oil should not be used except incases of necessity. "When the holy oils are about to fail, other olive oil that has not been blessed may be added, even repeatedly, but always insmaller quantity than the holy oils"(c.734). The oil of catechumens and chrism are *doubtful* matter.

799. THE PROXIMATE MATTER consists in the use of the remote matter, viz. the anointing of the sick person with the holy oil. In case of necessity a single anointing of one of the senses, preferably however of the forehead, is sufficient for *validity* together with the prescribed shorter form, but the obligation remains to supply the other anointings when the danger ceases and the person lives (c. 947, § I). For the *lawful* administration of this sacrament outside the case of necessity, it is required that the anointings be performed, *a)* with the thumb of the right hand, *b)* in the form of a cross, *c)* on each of the organs (where these exist), beginning with the right, *d)* in the order of anointing the senses prescribed in the Ritual, and at the same time observing the other rubrics.

If the sick person lacks any organ (e.g. a hand), the anointing is to be performed on the adjoining part, provided this is possible. Thus, for instance, if he lacks both feet and legs, he is not to be anointed on the hip.

When there exists a danger of contagion, the priest may use a brush or small stick. The anointing of the loins is always to be omitted. The anointing of the feet may be omitted for any good reason (ibid. 2 and 3). *The ordinary* FORM (in the Latin Church) is: Per istam sanctam unctionem et suam pussimarn misericordiam indulgent tibi Dominus, quidquid per visum (auditum, odoratum, gustum, locutionem, tactum, gressum) deliquisti. Amen."

The form to be used in*a case of necessity* when only a single anointing on the forehead is possible is : " Per istam salictam unctionem indulgent tibi Dominus, quidquid deliquisti. Amen." (Holy Office, April 25, 1906.) If only one anointing is possible and this form is used, once the danger passes all the anointings are to be supplied together with their respective forms. Although the sacrament was validly administered in the first instance by a single anointing and one form of words, nevertheless while there remains a moral union it is necessary to supply everything required for the integrity of the sacrament.

800. NOTE. If the sacrament is conferred conditionally, the condition to be expressed is not "si dispositus es," but "si es capax." For if the sacrament were administered under the first condition and the recipient did not possess the requisite dispositions, there would be no sacrament and it could not revive; oil the other hand, if the second condition is used, once the impediment ceases the sacrament revives.

Extreme Unction must be administered conditionally infour cases when there is a doubt *a)* whether the invalid has attained the use of reason; *b)* whether the danger of death is really present; *c)* whether the person is dead; *d)* whether the person stubbornly perseveres ill mortal sin without repentance (c.941 sq.).

CHAPTER II. THE EFFECTS OF EXTREME UNCTION

Some effects are regarded as the primary effects of the sacrament, others as its secondary effects.

801. THE PRIMARY effects are:

1. *as increase of sanctifying grace* which of its nature destroys the remnants of sin and consequently sin itself.

The Sacrament of Extreme Unction is primarily and of its nature a sacrament *of the living* and therefore prior to its reception the individual should be ina state of salictifying grace, either by receiving absolution or by an act of contrition which is at least *considered* to be perfect. But secondarily, and as a consequence, Extreme Unction is a sacrament *of the dead* causing the first grace and the remission of sins, as is evident from the words of St. James : "If he isguilty of sin, they will be par­doned," and also from the form used: "Indulgent tibi Dominus, quidquid deliquisti," as also from the Council of Trent sess. 14, c*.* 2.— Extreme Unction call be regarded as a more certain cause of the first grace than sacramental absolution given to all unconscious dying person, since the absolution cannot have effect unless there is a genuine act of attrition manifested externally, whereas for Extreme Unction nothing more is required than habitual attrition which need not be manifested externally. Therefore all care must be used to see that Extreme Unction is administered to one who is unconscious.

2. *sacramental grace* causing strength of soul against all evils, past, present, and to come, and the remission of venial sin and the remnants of sin.

THE SECONDARY EFFECTS of this sacrament are: 1. bodily health, if this is expedient for spiritual salvation; 2. remission of mortal sin, if the invalid being attrite inculpably omits both confession and perfect contrition.

CHAPTER III. THE SUBJECT AND THE MINISTER OF EXTREME UNCTION

1. THE SUBJECT of Extreme Unction is any baptized person, capable of serious sin, who is in probable danger of death from sickness or old age (c.940, § 1).

For the *valid* reception of this sacrament it is necessary that the recipient be *a)* baptized (with water); *b)* capable of personal sins, and therefore children before the age of reason andthose who are permanent lunatics cannot receive this sacrament; *c)* in probable danger of death from sickness or old age. St. James states expressly: "is one of you sick *(asthenei?)."* Therefore Extreme Unction cannot be administered to soldiers prior to battle nor to prisoners about to be executed nor to women before a dangerous delivery. Since old age itself is a sickness, it is lawful to administer the sacrament to allaged person who is ailing; *d)* habitually intending to receive this sacrament.

For the *lawful* reception of the sacrament there is required the state of grace, or contrition, or confession accompanied by attrition, or at least attrition, if confession or contrition is impossible.

NOTE. Extreme Unction should not be delayed until there is extreme danger of death but should be administered as soon as possible in a dangerous illness. Since it is not certain when the soul actually departs from the body the sacrament may be administered conditionally up to half an hour after apparent death.

1. THE OBLIGATION to receive Extreme Unction is not considered grave, provided that there is no scandal and no contempt for the sacrament.

No precept to this effect can be found either inSacred Scripture or in Tradition or inecclesiastical law, and therefore during the period of all interdict this sacrament cannot be administered except to those unable to receive the sacraments of Holy Eucharist and Penance. Although, generally speaking, there is only a slight obligation to receive this sacrament, no one is allowed to neglect it and all care should be taken that the sick receive it while they are fully conscious (c.944).

804. THE MINISTER for the *valid* administration of the sacrament is any priest and no one other than priest, as is evidentfrom the words of St. James: “Let him send for the presbyters of the church" and also from the definition of the Council of Trent, sess. 14, c.4.

The minister for the *lawful* administration of the sacrament in ordinary cases is the pastor of souls, namely: *a)* the parish priest of the place in which the sick person happens to be, or another priest with the permission at least presumed of the parish priest (c.938); *b)* a religious superior for his professed subjects, novices, domestics, and those who continually reside with him; *c)* a confessor to nuns. What has been said previously regarding the administration of Viaticum, n. 602, applies also to the administration of Extreme Unction. Religious who presume to administer Extreme Unction to lay persons are no longer subject to the excommunication formerly inflicted.—Pastors of souls have a grave obligation to administer this sacrament to those of their subjects who reasonably request it; other priests are under an obligation of charity (c.939).

In one and the same illness this sacrament cannot be *repeated,* unless the sick person recovered from his illness after receiving the anointing and again relapsed into another danger of death (c.940*,* § 2).

The reason for this prohibition is that the efficacy of this sacrament endures as long as the sick person is in danger of death from this illness or until lie dies. The danger of death is considered to have ceased if the sick person snakes some improvement over a notable period, e.g. a month, during the same long illness.