

On Death XIV

More on anointing.

Older Catholics are sometimes fearful of seeing a priest when they are sick; they remember the time when the priest only came when they were about to die, and they think that if they meet with the priest, perhaps confess, and receive the anointing they will surely die. But that is not so. I recall vividly when I was summoned to Kaiser in Walnut Creek to anoint a lady who was “on her last legs” as her daughter said. After anointing her, she got better, got out of the hospital, and as far as I know is still alive years later. Sometimes healing happens even when we have given up hope for it. It is far better to invite a priest at an early stage in illness to insure that the sacrament is administered, because given the reality of life, priests are sometimes not available in an “emergency” and people do die without those sacraments. However, we must remember and know that so called “last rites” are not necessary to eternal salvation. The merciful judge will not ask the person when they face Him if they were anointed. What is essential is a life that has been lived in the practice of the Faith, regular in prayer, regular at Mass, living according to the 10 commandments, and the precepts of the Church. The one glimpse we get of the judgment, however in Matthew 25 tells us that we will be judged on how we treated those around us: “I was hungry and you fed me, naked and you clothed me, sick and in prison and you visited me....when you did these things to the least of my brothers and sisters, you did it to me,” says Jesus.

IHM Pray for us.

Fr. Jerry