

Adult Faith Formation (Fall 2021) – Parish of the Assumption
Saint Joseph: Patron Saint of a Happy Death - OUTLINE
Rev. Ryan Amazeen
October 7, 2021

- Saint Joseph, patron saint of the dying and of a happy death
 - Died in the arms of Jesus, in the presence of Mary

- Cultural fear of death
 - Avoiding this subject does us great spiritual harm
 - Death, for the Christian, is a moment of hope
 - We have a duty to prepare for the moment of our death
 - Praying for the grace of a happy death

- What does “happy death” mean??
 - Does not refer to physical or emotional state of dying person
 - Suffering and sadness may be present
 - Refers to the state of a person’s soul at the moment of death
 - The person is in a **state of grace** – no mortal sin on the soul
 - In God’s friendship – when the person is prepared to enter into heaven
 - The person dies “in the arms of Jesus”

- How does a person die a “happy death?”
 - Receiving the **sacraments**
 - Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, and the Eucharist in the form of Viaticum
 - The sacraments apply the grace of salvation to our souls
 - They bestow grace to forgive us our sins, restore us to God’s friendship, and to endure the difficulties and resist the temptations of the illness and the dying process

- Purpose of the presentation
 - Overview of the theology and praxis of these sacraments
 - Clarify confusion about when to contact the priest

- The Sacrament of Reconciliation/Confession/Penance
 - John 20:22-23
 - “And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.’”
 - The only ordinary means, established by God, for the forgiveness of mortal sins
 - The acts of the penitent:
 - Confession of sins, including all unconfessed mortal sins
 - Contrition (sorrow for sin)
 - Penance

- The priest imparts **absolution**, granting the forgiveness of sins: “I absolve you...”
 - “The whole power of the sacrament of Penance consists in restoring us to God’s grace and joining us with him in an intimate friendship” (Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) 1468)
 - Forgiveness of mortal sins – mortal sin separates us from God
 - Dying in a state of mortal sin – no prospect of salvation
 - Even if not in state of mortal sin, the sacrament gives an abundance of grace
 - A chance to express sorrow to God for sins committed, and to experience the greatness of God’s mercy
 - Opportunity to get things “off your chest”
 - Give all your sins over to God’s mercy
 - **When to contact priest:** when person is fully conscious; at beginning of dying process or serious illness
- Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick
 - James 5:14-15
 - “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.”
 - This sacrament bestows:
 - A grace of strength, peace, and courage to overcome the difficulties associated with serious illness and old age (CCC 1520)
 - The grace to unite oneself to Christ’s passion (CCC 1521) – redemptive suffering
 - Possible physical healing, if conducive to person’s salvation
 - Strength to the dying person against temptations of the devil
 - Temptations to despair and to lose faith
 - Parts of the sacrament:
 - Laying on of hands by the priest
 - The “prayer of faith”
 - Anointing with blessed oil by the priest (only part necessary for validity)
 - Who can (and should) receive this sacrament?
 - “As soon as any one 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” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 73)
 - Those who have a serious illness
 - Some probability, even slight, of death
 - Elderly who are weakened by old age, even in the absence of serious illness
 - Sick person going in for surgery when serious illness is reason for surgery
 - Can be given to the same person more than once:
 - When person recovers, and becomes ill again
 - When person’s situation worsens, in course of same illness

- **When to contact priest:** BEGINNING of serious illness
 - Right when someone receives the diagnosis
 - Reasons:
 - With priest shortage, priest may not make it in time if called at the last minute
 - So the sick person can receive the grace of the sacrament as they battle the illness
 - Call the priest again if condition becomes worse

- The Eucharist in the form of Viaticum
 - The sacrament proper to the dying
 - Viaticum: from a Latin word for “journey”
 - Viaticum is the Eucharist when it is given to the dying to prepare them for the “journey” from this world to the next
 - “The completion and crown of the Christian life on this earth, signifying that the Christian follows the Lord to eternal glory and the banquet of the heavenly kingdom” (Pastoral Care of the Sick 175)
 - Form of Viaticum: “May the Lord Jesus Christ protect you and lead you to eternal life.”
 - John 6:54
 - “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day”
 - “The seed of eternal life and the power of the resurrection” (CCC 1524)
 - “The pledge of the life to come”
 - Principal fruit of this sacrament – intimate union with Jesus Christ
 - An obligation of the Christian faithful:
 - “The Christian faithful who are in danger of death from any cause are to be nourished by holy communion in the form of Viaticum” (Code of Canon Law (CIC) 921)
 - “Holy Viaticum for the sick is not to be delayed too long; those who have the care of souls are to be zealous and vigilant that the sick are nourished by Viaticum while fully conscious” (CIC 922)
 - **When to call the priest:** when person is closer to death but still conscious and able to swallow
 - May require foresight
 - Always better to call sooner rather than later
 - Apostolic pardon
 - Part of ritual of Viaticum
 - Plenary indulgence bestowed on dying person
 - Person will spend no time in purgatory
 - Only priest can bestow