

How to prepare for a sick call

"I was sick and you visited Me." - St. Matt 25



The visits of the priest must be prepared. God is entering the house and He must be honoured. The place should be tidy and clean showing due honour to the Divine Guest. Our Lord's Presence entering a house is not an insignificant event and it must be prepared properly. It is a moment when your home is transformed into a form of chapel, a place where Eternity and grace will enter time through the Sacraments.

In the room of the sick person there should be a small "*altar*" that is clearly visible to the sick person: a table covered in *a clean white cloth* with *two lit blessed candles* and *standing crucifix*. There should be also a *small bowl of water* in which the priest may purify his fingers at the end of the rite of Communion or the Anointing. A small bottle of *holy water for sprinkling* will allow the priest to properly begin the ceremonies.



If the **Sacrament of Extreme Unction** is to be administered there should also be a small plate or bowl with *six cotton buds*, or one or two *slices of bread* and a *slice of lemon* (the citric acid cuts the oil on the priest's fingers). Afterwards the cotton, bread and lemon must be burned and then buried.

These things should be ready well before the priest arrives. In fact, any Catholic household worthy of the name will always have these items respectfully set aside for just such occasions.

When we *greet the priest* at the door we should do so *with a lit candle* (this can be one of the ones from the altar) and lead him to the room of the sick person. All others in the house should be prayerful, and on

their knees when the Blessed Sacrament enters, showing no less reverence than they would show in the church to the same Presence. Men should not have their heads covered and women should be properly veiled. Those in the house should not disappear, but should remain to pray along with the ceremonies. Should there be a confession to be heard, the priest will ask for all to withdraw, but otherwise it is proper that all honour the arrival of the Divine Physician. Needless to say, televisions, radios and all other commotion should be silenced during the visit.

At the end of the ceremonies the priest may ask for the others to withdraw if the sick person wishes to speak to him alone, otherwise it is proper for one to accompany the priest to the door that he might take leave. Should he still be *carrying the Blessed Sacrament, all the required respect and adoration must be shown* even once the ceremonies have concluded. The priest will usually give a blessing with the Blessed Sacrament and then depart immediately to visit the next sick individual.

In addition, the faithful who visit the sick in order to perform the works of charity may obtain a *partial indulgence*. (*Pius VII, Audience, February 28, 1778; S.P. Ap., February 16, 1932*)

When illness strikes, we must think to notify in time the priest of those who are in the hospital with serious illness, or those who might be housebound with chronic sickness or old age. In case of necessity, do not wait; call the priest, the physician of souls. Remember, one of the graces through the Anointing of the sick is to receive healing should this be for the benefit of the patient. Many graces of healing have been known in the administration of the Sacraments. Waiting until the last moment only limits, or cuts off entirely, the possibility of this grace – short of a miracle, which, of course, we can never presume.

Although quite secondary, relative to the reception of the Sacraments, one should remember that remuneration for the priest's travel is appropriate as a reimbursement toward the church's overall costs in the apostolate.



A Prayer for the Sick to St. Camillus de Lellis

O glorious Saint Camillus, special patron of the sick, thou who for forty years, with truly heroic charity, didst devote thyself to the relief of their temporal and spiritual necessities, be pleased to assist them now even more generously, since thou art blessed in heaven and they have been committed by holy Church to thy powerful protection.

Obtain for them from Almighty God the healing of all their maladies, or, at least, the spirit of Christian patience and resignation that may sanctify them and comfort them in the hour of their passing to eternity; at the same time get us the precious grace of living and dying after thine example in the practice of divine love. Amen.

Our Father. Hail Mary.
Glory be to the Father.

*A partial indulgence; plenary, under the usual conditions,
if recited devoutly every day for a month.*

(S. C. Ind., February 27, 1894; S. P. Ap., April 24, 1931)

