

Last Rites

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ....” (Corinthians 5:10)

What are the Last Rites?



The Last Rites are administered by a priest to a dying Christian. These Rites usually entail three Sacraments – Confession, Anointing and Holy Communion (*Viaticum*) – plus the giving of Apostolic Pardon, which is an “indulgence” that remits the effects of sin. Scripture readings and other prayers are also part of the Rites. There are additional prayers for “Commendation of the Dying” that a priest may say after the Last Rites. It’s especially consoling if family and friends say the Rosary or the Litany of Saints at a dying person’s bedside.

If the dying person cannot confess, the priest may ask them to silently give their sins to God, and he will give Absolution and Apostolic Pardon. If the dying person cannot take food, the priest will not give Holy Communion.

It’s best not to wait until the “last minute” to call a priest. Last Rites can be given anytime in the process of dying, even if death is not imminent. If a priest arrives after the person has died, he will say the ritual “Prayers after Death.”

Many dying people, even in painful circumstances, experience serenity and peace after the Last Rites. They receive the strength to let go and face the “judgment seat of Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:10).