

Visiting those who are ill - Proper Spiritual Care for the Sick

By V. Rev. Dr. Joseph F. Purpura

Everyone needs prayer, especially the prayers and blessings of the Church in our daily life. Prayer is particularly important when a loved one becomes sick and near death, and it is the practice of the Church to call the priest to visit and pray and anoint the sick.

Please call the priest as early as possible (and not just for those who are dying) so the priest may visit the sick person at home or in the hospital in order that the priest may spiritually guide the ill person. Presently, family members call the priest only at the last moments prior to death, but the Orthodox practice is for the priest to visit and pray for everyone who is sick, not just the dying. Indeed, the Scripture says to call the presbyters so that they might come and anoint the sick with oil and prayers for healing, physically and spiritually. St. James writes, "Is any man sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick man. And the Lord shall raise him up: and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him." (James 5:14-15). With the prayers of the Church and the Priest our hope is that the person will receive healing and that they will live.

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