

**THE SACRAMENTS: A
DOGOMATIC
TREATISE; VOLUME IV**

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The sacraments: a dogmatic treatise; Volume IV by Joseph Pohle & Arthur Preuss

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THE SACRAMENTS

A DOGMATIC TREATISE

BY

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AUTHORIZED ENGLISH VERSION WITH SOME ABRIDGMENT
AND ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

BY

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VOLUME IV

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PART I

EXTREME UNCTION

INTRODUCTION

Extreme Unction, according to the Tridentine Council, is the completion of Penance, and of the whole Christian life.¹

Outwardly the intimate relation existing between the two Sacraments of Extreme Unction and Penance is evidenced by the fact that the Council deals with Extreme Unction in connection with Penance, as it deals with Confirmation in connection with Baptism.²

Aside from the decrees of Trent, the dogmatic teaching of the Church on Extreme Unction is stated most fully in the famous *Decretum pro Armenis*, issued by Pope Eugene IV, in 1439.

The name *Extrema Unctio* became a technical term in the West towards the end of the twelfth century. The adjective "Extreme" does not mean that the anointment given in this Sacrament

¹ *Conc. Trid.*, Sess. XIV, *De Extr. Unct.*: "Sacramentum extremæ unctionis non modo poenitentiae, sed et totius christianæ vite consummativum existimatum est a Patribus."
² *Conc. Trid.*, Sess. VII.

is the last, or that the subject must die after its reception. This is a superstitious belief which has often led to neglect and procrastination. How unfounded it is appears from the fact that theologians count the restoration of bodily health among the effects of Extreme Unction, though, of course, this is secondary, and conditioned upon the state of the patient's soul.

Extreme Unction is called the *last* anointment in a purely liturgical sense, because it is preceded by the anointments conferred in Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders.

Extreme Unction can be administered only to persons who are dangerously ill, and hence is also called "the Sacrament of the departing" (*sacramentum exeuntium*).³ Dr. Toner thinks that, "having regard to the conditions prevailing at the time when the name was introduced, it is much more probable that it was intended originally to mean 'the unction of those *in extremis*,' i. e. the dying."⁴ This theory derives probability from the fact that the corresponding name, *sacramentum exeuntium*, became current during the same period.

In the East the technical term for Extreme Unction is τὸ ἅγιον ἔλαιον, i. e. "the holy oil," or τὸ

³ Cf. *Conc. Trid.*, Sess. XIV: "Redemptor noster . . . extremæ unctionis sacramento finem vitæ

tamquam firmissimo quodam præsidio munivit."

⁴ P. J. Toner in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. V, p. 716.