

THE BLESSING OF THE OILS AND THE CONSECRATION OF THE CHRISM

INTRODUCTION

1. 1. The Bishop is to be regarded as the High Priest of his flock, from whom the life in Christ of his faithful is in some way derived and upon whom it depends.¹

The Chrism Mass, which he concelebrates with Priests from various regions of the diocese and during which he consecrates the sacred Chrism and blesses the other oils, is among the principal manifestations of the fullness of the Bishop's Priesthood and is considered to be a sign of the close bond of the Priests with him. For it is with the sacred Chrism consecrated by the Bishop that the newly baptized are anointed and those to be confirmed are signed. It is with the Oil of Catechumens that catechumens are prepared and disposed for Baptism. Finally it is with the Oil of the Sick that those who are ill are comforted in their infirmity.

2. 2. The Christian Liturgy has made its own the practice of the Old Testament since kings, priests, and prophets were anointed with the oil of consecration because they prefigured Christ, whose name means 'Anointed of the Lord'.

Similarly, by sacred Chrism it is also shown that through Baptism Christians have been incorporated into the Paschal Mystery of Christ have died, been buried and risen with him,² are sharers in his kingly and prophetic Priesthood and through Confirmation receive the spiritual anointing of the Holy Spirit, who is given to them.

By the Oil of Catechumens the effect of the Exorcisms is extended when those to be baptized are strengthened to renounce the devil and sin before approaching the font of life to be reborn.

Saint James bears witness to the use of the Oil of the Sick.³ It offers the sick a remedy for infirmity of body and soul, so that they can bravely endure and fight against evils and obtain pardon for sins.

I. The Matter

3. 3. The suitable matter for a Sacrament is olive oil or, if appropriate, another oil extracted from plants.
4. 4. Chrism is made with oil and with fragrances or other aromatic material.
5. 5. The preparation of the Chrism may be carried out either privately before the consecration or by the Bishop during the liturgical action.

II. The Minister

6. 6. The Consecration of the Chrism belongs exclusively to the Bishop.
7. 7. The Oil of Catechumens, if in the judgment of the Conference of Bishops its use is retained, is blessed by the Bishop together with the other oils during the Chrism Mass.

1 Cf. Vatican Council II, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 42.

2 *Ibid.*, no. 6.

3 James 5:14

Nonetheless, Priests are granted the faculty of blessing the Oil of Catechumens in the case of the Baptism of adults, before the Anointing at the appropriate stage in the Catechumenate.

8. 8. The oil to be used in the Anointing of the Sick must be blessed for this purpose by the Bishop or by a Priest who enjoys this faculty, either by virtue of the law or by a special concession of the Holy See.

By law the oil to be used in the Anointing of the Sick may be blessed by:

- a) one who is equivalent in law to the Diocesan Bishop;
- b) in case of true necessity, any Priest.

III. The Day of the Blessing

9. 9. The Blessing of the Oil of the Sick and of the Oil of Catechumens and the Consecration of the Chrism are ordinarily carried out by the Bishop on Thursday of Holy Week at the proper Mass to be celebrated in the morning.
10. 10. If, however, it is somewhat difficult for the clergy and people to gather with the Bishop on that day, this blessing may be anticipated on an earlier day, but near Easter, with the proper Mass always being used.

IV. The Place of the Blessing in the Liturgical Action

11. 11. In accord with the traditional practice of the Latin Liturgy, the Blessing of the Oil of the Sick takes place before the end of the Eucharistic Prayer, and the Blessing of the Oil of Catechumens and the Consecration of the Chrism after Communion.
12. 12. Nevertheless, for pastoral reasons, it is permissible for the entire Rite of Blessing to be carried out after the Liturgy of the Word, following the Order described below.