

The Order of Blessing the Oil of Catechumens and of the Sick and of Consecrating the Chrism

Notes

Introduction

A new translation was issued in January 2018 for use by dioceses. The decree of publication indicates that it must be used for Chrism Masses in 2018 onwards.

Changes

The Latin *editio typica* remains unaltered, however the Bishops of England and Wales did request a couple of amendments to clarify the text which were confirmed.

- 15, 19. The text did refer to the *Rite of Concelebration* this has been superseded and reference is now made to the section of the *General Instruction of Roman Missal* which describes Concelebrated Masses
- 16. A careful reading of the text, and comparison with the *Roman Missal* and the *Ceremonial of Bishops* makes clear that the Universal Prayer (or Prayer of Faithful) at the Chrism Mass is the latter part of the Renewal of Priestly Promises where the Bishops turns to the people and says *As for you, dearest sons and daughters* (Roman Missal, page 323).

Structure

The rite offers two different patterns for where the oils are blessed: the Blessing of the Oil of Sick before the end of the Eucharistic Prayer and the Oil of Catechumens and the Chrism after Communion; alternatively they may all take place after the Liturgy of the Word.

1 — traditional order

- Introductory Rites
- Liturgy of the Word
 - Readings
 - Homily
 - Renewal of Priestly Promises
- Rite of Blessing
 - **Procession of Oils and Gifts**
 - **Reception of Oils and Gifts by the Bishop**
- Liturgy of the Eucharist
 - Preparation of Gifts
 - Eucharistic Prayer
 - *before the end*
 - **Blessing of Oil of the Sick**
 - Communion Rite
 - Prayer after Communion
 - **Blessing of the Oil of Catechumens**
 - **Consecration of the Chrism**
- Concluding Rites
 - Procession

2 — after Liturgy of the Word

- Introductory Rites
- Liturgy of the Word
 - Readings
 - Homily
 - Renewal of Priestly Promises
- Rite of Blessing
 - **Procession of Oils and Gifts**
 - **Reception of Oils and Gifts by the Bishop**
 - **Blessing of Oil of the Sick**
 - **Blessing of the Oil of Catechumens**
 - **Consecration of the Chrism**
- Liturgy of the Eucharist
 - Preparation of Gifts
 - Eucharistic Prayer
 - Communion Rite
- Concluding Rites
 - Procession

Notes

The following notes are drawn from the rite, the *Ceremonial of Bishops, Paschale Solemnitatis* and diocesan practice in England and Wales.

Timing and Place

Traditionally, the Chrism Mass is celebrated on the Thursday of Holy Week. If, however, it should prove to be difficult for the clergy and people to gather with the bishop, this rite can be transferred to another day, but one always close to Easter. The Chrism and the oil of catechumens is to be used in the celebration of the sacraments of initiation on Easter night.

There should be only one celebration of the Chrism Mass, given its significance in the life of the diocese, and it should take place in the cathedral or, for pastoral reasons, in another church that has a special significance. (PS 35, 36)

Renewal of Priestly Promises and Universal Prayer

After the Homily, the Bishop, wearing his mitre, takes the crozier for the Renewal of Priestly Promises. For the Universal Prayer (i.e. *As for your, dearest sons and daughters*) he puts aside his mitre and crozier. He may take his mitre again to receive the oils but it is not worn for the blessing of the oils or consecration of the Chrism.

Hymn

The meter of the verses of the hymn *O Redemptor* is 87 87, the refrain an additional 87. For those wishing sing this text but seeking another tune consideration might be given to tunes such as *Picardy* or *Westminster Abbey* with the refrain being used after the verse and sung to the last two lines of the hymn tune.

Procession

In the first and second form the Oils and the Gifts are brought up together. Note that the rite reserves the carrying of the oil for the Chrism to a Deacon or Priest.

The following order is observed:

- [Fragrance]
- Oil of Catechumens
- Oil of the Sick
- Oil for the Chrism
- Bread, wine and water

These are received by the bishop at the chair or (in front of) the altar. In some dioceses the announcement is sung and there is an acclamation by the congregation in response.

If the second form is used a chair (faldstool) may be placed in front of the altar if that is where the blessings will take place.

The oils and gifts are received in reverse order to the procession:

- Bread, wine and water
- Oil for the Chrism
- Oil of the Sick
- Oil of Catechumens

Some dioceses, where the second form is used (after the Liturgy of the Word) split the procession up with each Oil being brought up separately, announced and then prayed over, finally the gifts of bread, wine and water are brought to the altar and Mass continues with the Preparation of Gifts.

It may be helpful to note that the rubric (21) that the concelebrating Priests stand around the Bishop, on either side like a crown', is translated in the *Ceremonial of Bishops* as a semi-circle.

Final Procession

The Oils are carried out in the procession at the end of Mass. No order is given but the same order as the Procession earlier in the Mass suggests itself: Oil of Catechumens, Oil of the Sick, Chrism. The blessed Oils follow the cross, and the procession is accompanied by incense.

Care of the sacred Oils

After the liturgy the Bishop is encourage to instruct his Priests how the sacred Oils should be treated, honoured and carefully stored. Pope Francis had said the following to the priests of Rome at the end of the Chrism Mass.

Dear brothers, we have blessed the Chrism, the oil of catechumens and the oil of the sick. They are now entrusted to you, Bishops and Priests, so that divine grace, the bearer of strength and life, may flow in souls through your ministry. Take care to respect, honour, and protect these oils, signs of God's grace; may those persons, places and things marked by them be resplendent with the holiness of God.

Reception of the Oils

The Holy Oils can be brought to the individual parishes before the celebration of the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper, or at some other suitable time. This can be a means of catechizing the faithful about the use and effects of the Holy oils and Chrism in Christian life.

This note from *Paschale Solemnitatis* is echoed on page 327 of the *Roman Missal*, following the Chrism Mass. The placing of the rubric and its text suggests that this is something which takes place prior to the Evening Mass rather than integrated into it. Though the significance of the Oils and their importance within the Easter Vigil is acknowledged there is a danger of overloading the already rich Maundy Thursday celebration with further elements.