

CATHOLIC
DIOCESE
of
BALLARAT



Diocesan Liturgical Commission

GUIDELINES FOR THE PROPER CARE AND USE OF THE HOLY OILS

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF BALLARAT

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INTRODUCTION

The Chrism Mass, which the bishop concelebrates with his college of presbyters, is the Mass at which the bishop consecrates the holy chrism and blesses the other oils. “The holy chrism consecrated by the bishop is used to anoint the newly baptized, to seal the candidates for confirmation, and to anoint the hands of presbyters and the heads of bishops at their ordination, as well as in the rites of anointing pertaining to the dedication of churches and altars. The oil of catechumens is used in the preparation of the catechumens for their baptism. The oil of the sick is used to bring comfort and support to the sick in their infirmity.”

(Ceremonial of Bishops, 274)

RECEPTION, STORAGE & USE OF OILS

1. The use of the proper oils involves the validity of the sacrament celebrated; therefore it is important that the proper oils be used. “In administering the sacraments in which holy oils must be used, the minister must use oils pressed from olives or other plants and consecrated or blessed recently by a bishop; he is not to use old oils unless it is necessary.” (*Canon 847§1*). It is not permitted to dilute the holy oils with additional olive oil in order to fill the oil stocks that will be displayed (*see number 5*).
2. “Each year when the bishop blesses the oils and consecrates the chrism, the pastor should see that the old oils are properly disposed of by burning and that they are replaced by the newly blessed oils” (*Book of Blessings, # 1127*).
3. “The pastor is to obtain the holy oils from his own bishop and is to preserve them diligently with proper care” (*Canon 847§2*). Priests have a responsibility to see to the reverent use and safe custody of the holy oils. (*Sacramentary, Appendix II, “Rite of the Blessing of Oils and Consecrating the Chrism” 28*). “The oils used for the celebration of the sacraments of initiation, holy orders and anointing of the sick according to ancient tradition are reverently reserved in a special place in the church. This repository should be secured and protected by a lock” (*Book of Blessings, #1125*).

4. The bottles containing the oils given to the parishes from the Chrism Mass are not for display purposes or liturgical use. These bottles are meant to transport the oils or for non-public storage. It is highly recommended that the Oils be contained throughout the year in beautiful and dignified containers, ideally of glass. Vessels and implements used in the liturgical celebration should be of such quality and design that they speak of the importance of the ritual action in which the assembly is engaged. "The vessels used to hold the holy oils, should be worthy of their function and be closed in such a way as to prevent the oils from being spilled and to insure that they remain fresh" (*Book of Blessings*,#1126).
5. The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments has stated that unblest oil may be added to blessed oil only in the case of necessity. This would exclude diluting the oils merely in order to increase the volume of oils for display.
6. It is understood that clergy will also need to individually carry the oils according to custom and with due care for the manner in which this is done.
7. The oils blessed at the Chrism Mass may be received in a ritual way in the parish during the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday (a Rite for the Parish Reception of the Oils is available from the Pastoral Ministry Office). The oils should be brought forward "in suitable vessels," not in the glass bottles.
8. The oils used during the celebration of baptism, confirmation and anointing of the sick should not be wiped off the person anointed.
9. The oils are NOT to be employed for non-sacramental use. The holy oils which must be renewed each year are for sacramental use only. They are sacred and should be treated with dignity and respect and not be subjected to non-sacramental uses.

CHRISM

10. The consecration of the chrism belongs to the bishop alone. (*Sacramentary, Appendix II, "Rite of the Blessing of Oils and Consecrating the Chrism" 6, also see Canon 880§2*).

OIL OF THE SICK

11. In case of true necessity the priest may bless additional oils for the anointing of the sick. "In addition to a bishop, the following can bless the oil to be used in the anointing of the sick:

1/ those equivalent to a diocesan bishop by law;

2/ any presbyter in a case of necessity, but only in the actual celebration of the sacrament." (*Canon 999*)

This means the priest may bless oil for the anointing of the sick for a particular use, not to provide oil for display purposes.

12. Reverence for the oils and for the church they serve suggests the reservation of the parish oils in one common repository. This is normally in the Parish Church. Clear distinction must be made between the vessels holding the different oils so that there is no confusion regarding the taking / replacing of oil in the different containers.

OIL OF CATECHUMENS

13. The oil of catechumens is blessed by the bishop. "In the case of the baptism of adults, however, priests have the faculty to bless the oil of catechumens before the anointing in the designated stage of the Catechumenate" (*Sacramentary, Appendix II, "Rite of the Blessing of Oils and Consecrating the Chrism" 7 and RCIA, 101*).

CONCLUSION

14. Renewal of the liturgy requires the opening up of our symbols, especially the fundamental ones of bread and wine, water, the laying on of hands and oil. Liturgy has suffered historically from a kind of minimalism and an overriding concern for efficiency. As a result, our symbols tended in practice to shrivel up and petrify. The use of the oils in the sacramental rites is encouraged in a generous manner. Gestures which are broad and full in both a visual and tactile sense support the entire symbolic ritual. These actions can engage and unify the entire assembly and lead the People of God to an authentic appreciation of symbol.

Reference

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