

repositories, one for each oil. Thus the oil from the smaller vessels not used on a given visit to the sick is to be poured back into the larger vessel, or the several smaller vessels that are carried to the sick are to be reserved in the same repository.” (*Sacristy Manual*, published by Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago, p. 68, also see *Pastoral Care of the Sick*, 22)

OIL OF CATECHUMENS

12. 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”. Also see *RCIA*, 101) This means the priest may bless the oil of catechumens for a particular use only and not to provide oil for display purposes.

CONCLUSION

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 anointing with oil. “Just as Christ invited those who heard him to share his personal union with the Father through material signs, so Christ leads the Church through these same signs in the liturgy from the visible to the invisible. As a result, effective liturgical signs, have a teaching function and encourage full, conscious, and active participation, express and strengthen faith, and lead people to God. Poorly utilized or minimal signs do not enliven the community’s faith and can even diminish active participation. It must likewise be kept in mind that the liturgy and its signs and symbols do not exercise merely a teaching function. They also touch and move a person to conversion of heart and not simply to enlightenment of mind.” (*Built of Living Stones*, 26) The use of the oils in the sacramental rites is encouraged in a generous manner. These actions can engage and unify the entire assembly and lead the People of God to an authentic appreciation of symbol.

Instruction on the Proper Care and Use of the Holy Oils



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 the 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)

GENERAL COMMENTS

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 the administration of sacraments in which the sacred oils are to be used, the minister must use oils pressed from olives or from other plants that have been recently consecrated or blessed by the bishop (see 9, 10, 12 below); he is not to use old oils unless there is some necessity.” (Canon 847) 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 5 below)
2. “Each year when the bishop blesses the oils and consecrates the chrism, the pastor should see that the oil 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 sacred oils from his own bishop and keep them carefully in a fitting place." (Canon 847) 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) It is a laudable practice to display oils in larger more dignified containers. (See *Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy Newsletter*, 1994, Volume XXX, August/September 1994)

4. The plastic bottles containing the oils given to the parishes after the Chrism Mass, are not for display purposes or liturgical use. The plastic containers are used to transport the oils or for non-public storage. If the oils are to be displayed they should be displayed in dignified vessels. When being used in the liturgy the oils should be in proper vessels, not in the plastic containers.

"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.....vessels for holy oils...are presented to the assembly in one way or another and speak well or ill of the deed in which the assembly is engaged." (*Environment and Art in Catholic Worship*, 97) "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. (See *Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy Newsletter*, 1994, Volume XXX, August/September 1994) In order to provide parishes and institutions of the Archdiocese with sufficient oil for use in the liturgy and for display purposes, a larger amount of the holy oils will be provided to those parishes and institutions which make a request.



6. 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. The oils are presented during the presentation of the gifts. See the *Sacramentary Supplement* for this rite. The oils should be brought forward "in suitable vessels," not in the plastic containers. (See: "The Reception of the Holy Oils Blessed at the Chrism Mass" in the *Sacramentary Supplement*. This supplement is available through the Office of Divine Worship.)

7. The oils used during the celebration of baptism, confirmation and anointing of the sick should not be wiped off the person anointed.

8. 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." (Letter of Archbishop McCarrick, March 1, 1994).

CHRISM

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

OIL OF THE SICK

10. In case of true necessity the priest may bless additional oils for the anointing of the sick. "Beside a bishop those can bless the oil to be used in the anointing of the sick: ...in case of necessity, any priest but only in the 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.

11. "There is no universal practice here, but it seems quite clear that the oils, even in their smallest vessels, are not to be kept permanently in a priest's jacket, in the rectory, or in a safe or cabinet of the less-frequented sacristy. ...Reverence for the oils and for the church they serve necessitate the reservation of all of the parish oils in one common repository or three individual