



ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
DIOCESE OF
HONOLULU



Q = WHAT IS THE CHRISM MASS?

Traditionally, the Chrism Mass is celebrated during Holy Week, on the morning of Holy Thursday. However, it can fall on another day of the week, or during the Lenten season, as close to Holy Week as possible. During the Mass, three types of oils are blessed for use in each parish in the diocese for the coming year. Also at the Mass, all the priests and the bishop publicly renew their commitment to priestly service.

Q= WHAT ARE THE THREE OILS?

The three oils are the Sacred Chrism, Oil of Catechumens, and the Oil of the Sick.

SACRED CHRISM

The Sacred Chrism is consecrated by the bishop at the Chrism Mass. It is important to note that it may only be consecrated by the bishop. The bishop pours a fragrant perfume called balsam* into the oil and mixes it. Its distinct smell is meant to symbolize the 'aroma of Christ' which our lives are meant to give off. (CCC 1294) The Sacred Chrism is used to anoint the newly baptized, to seal the candidates for Confirmation, and to anoint the hands of priests and heads of bishops at their ordination. The Sacred Chrism is also used in rituals pertaining to the dedication of churches and altars. Anointing with the Sacred Chrism signifies the call of the baptized to the threefold ministry of priest, prophet, and king.

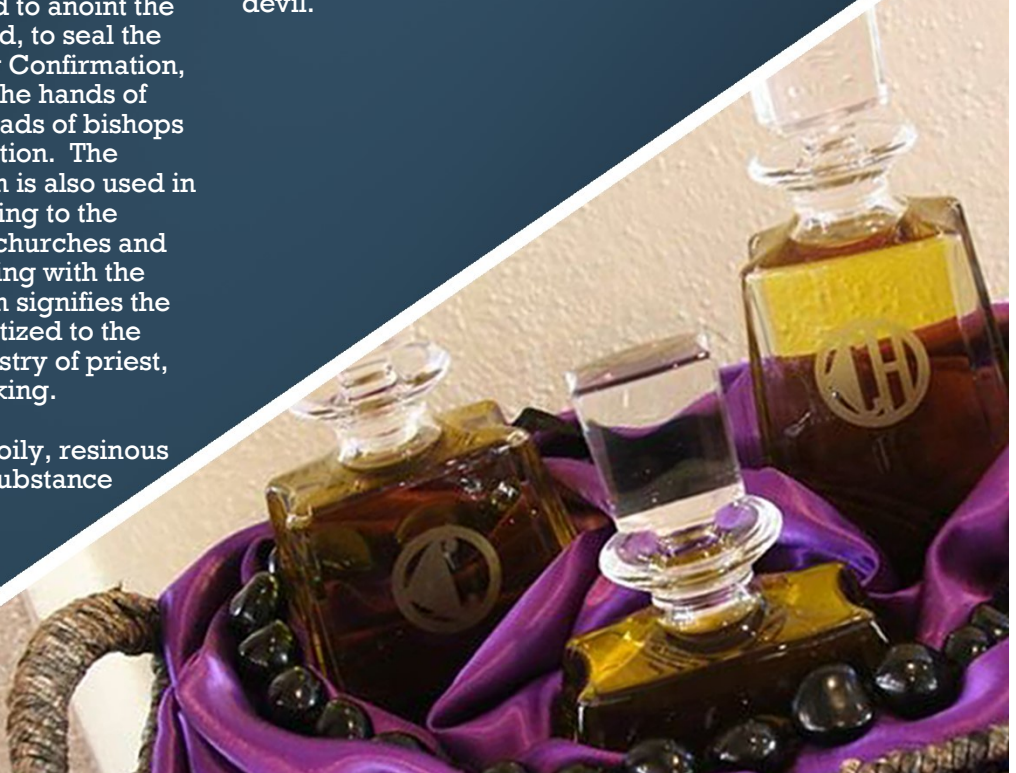
*Balsam is an oily, resinous and fragrant substance from plants.

OIL OF CATECHUMENS

The Oil of Catechumens is blessed by the bishop at the Chrism Mass. Children and adults preparing for the Sacrament of Baptism are anointed with this oil as a preparation for the life in Christ that awaits them in baptism. It is used as a source of strength to renounce sin and the devil.

OIL OF THE SICK

The Oil of the Sick is blessed by the bishop at the Chrism Mass. It is used to anoint the elderly and those suffering from serious illness so that they might find healing and strength through the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick.



Q= WHAT KIND OF OIL IS USED, AND WHY?

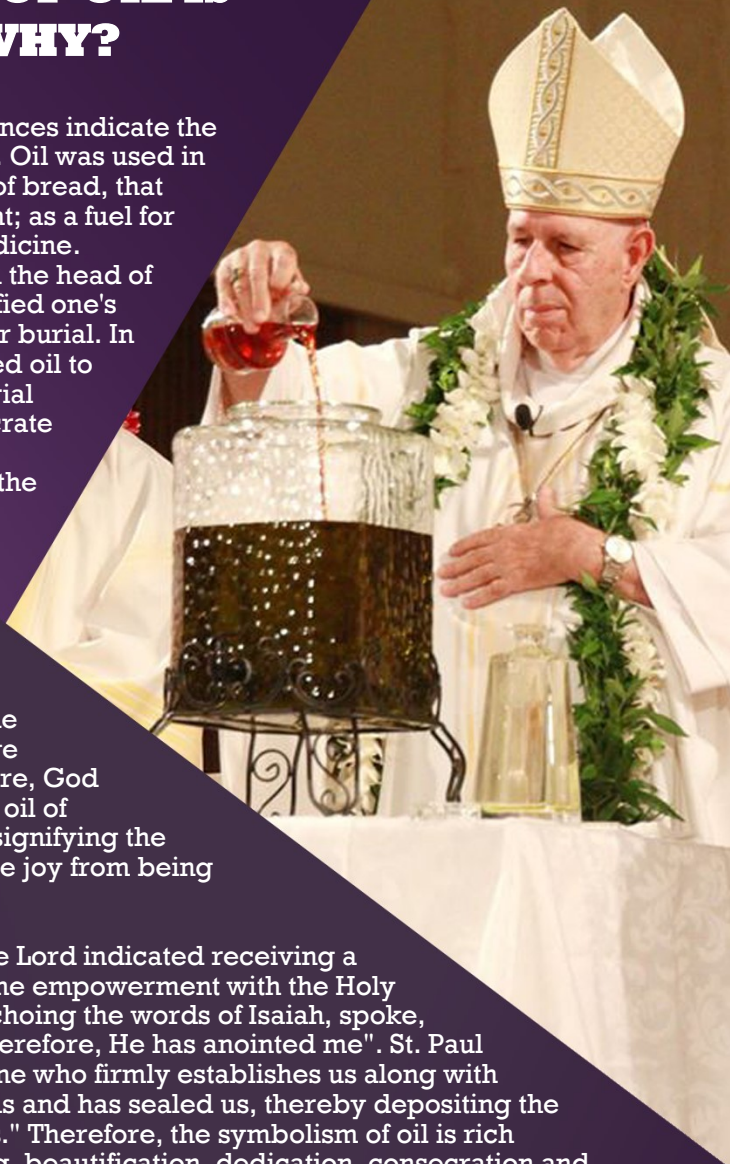
Throughout the Bible, various references indicate the importance of **Olive Oil** in daily life. Oil was used in cooking, particularly in the making of bread, that basic food substance for nourishment; as a fuel for lamps; and as a healing agent in medicine.

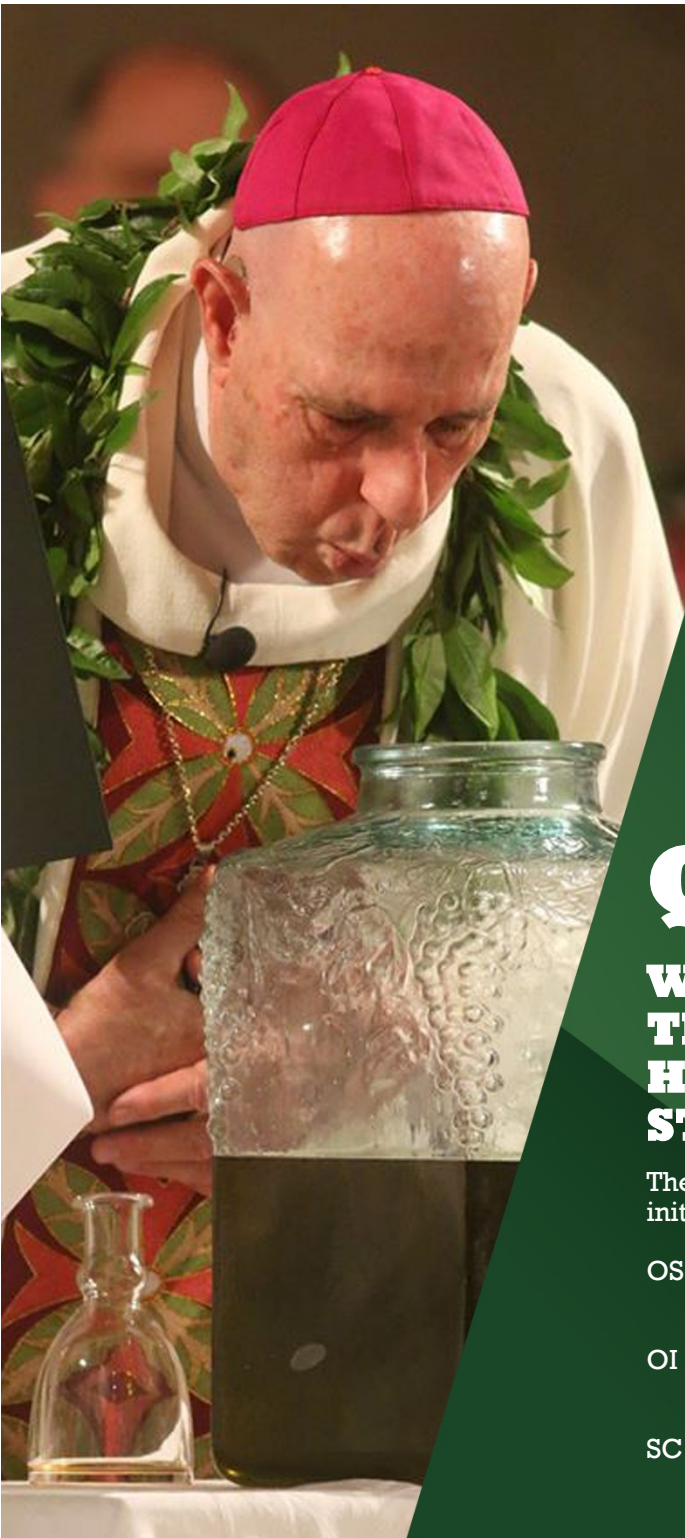
Moreover, with oil the Jews anointed the head of a guest as a sign of welcome, beautified one's appearance and prepared a body for burial. In religious practices, the Jews also used oil to offer sacrifices; to dedicate a memorial stone in honor of God; and to consecrate the meeting tent, the Ark of the Covenant, the table, the lampstand, the laver, the altar of incense, and the altar of holocausts.

Sacred Scripture also attests to the spiritual symbolism of oil. For instance, Psalm 23:5 reads, "You anoint my head with oil," signifying favor and strength from the Lord; and Psalm 45:8 reads, "You love justice and hate wickedness; therefore, God your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellow kings," signifying the special designation from God and the joy from being his servant.

Moreover, to be "the anointed" of the Lord indicated receiving a special vocation from the Lord and the empowerment with the Holy Spirit to fulfill that vocation: Jesus, echoing the words of Isaiah, spoke, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me; therefore, He has anointed me". St. Paul emphasized this point, "God is the one who firmly establishes us along with you in Christ; it is He who anointed us and has sealed us, thereby depositing the first payment, the Spirit in our hearts." Therefore, the symbolism of oil is rich sanctification, healing, strengthening, beautification, dedication, consecration and sacrifice. Given this heritage, the early Church adopted the use of olive oil for its sacramental rituals.

(Excerpt from The Arlington Catholic Herald <https://bit.ly/2WNCqf8>)





Q=

WHY DOES THE BISHOP BREATHE INTO THE SACRED CHRISM?

During the Chrism Mass, the bishop breathes into the vessel of oil containing the oil and balsam mixture. This gesture recalls Jesus breathing on his disciples after the resurrection and sending the Holy Spirit (John 20:22).

Q=

WHAT IS ETCHED ON THE VESSELS THE HOLY OILS ARE STORED IN?

The Holy Oil vessels are etched with the initials of their Latin names:

OS | Oleum Sanctum
Oil of Catechumens

OI | Oleum Infirmorum
Oil of the Sick

SC | Sanctum Chrisma
Sacred Chrism



Q= WHY DO THE PRIESTS AND BISHOP RENEW THEIR PRIESTLY PROMISES AT THIS MASS?

The bishop invites the priests to renew the promises they made at their ordination: to dedicate their life in service to the Church - to preach the Gospel and teach the Catholic faith, to faithfully celebrate the sacraments and to pray for God's people.

The bishop also asks the people to pray for their priests, that the Lord may bless them with the fullness of his love and to help them be faithful ministers of Christ. The bishop also asks for prayers for himself so that he may be a faithful and humble servant to all.

Q= WHAT HAPPENS WITH THE OILS AFTER THE CHRISM MASS?

At the end of Chrism Mass, the Holy Oils are brought back to the parishes of the diocese for use in the coming year. They are usually presented to the parish community during the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday. Parishes keep the Holy Oils in a receptacle called an ambry, usually near the baptismal font.



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