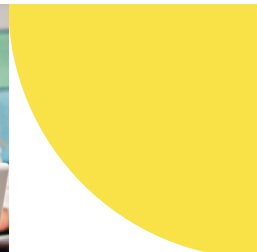


This is the fifth bulletin insert in a series as we focus on aspects of our church and the Mass as part of our *Celebrate the Sacraments...* A New Beginning for the Family campaign.

CELEBRATE
the Sacraments...
A NEW
Beginning
FOR THE FAMILY

A Campaign for St. Mary Catholic Parish



SACRAMENTAL OILS

This week we continue our series with a look at the sacramental oils used to mark important events in the life of the Church; we will also discuss the ambry, or the container, which houses them.

For the ancient Israelites, olive oil was an important ingredient of everyday life. Oil was used to bake bread (the basic food of the ancient world), light lamps, heal wounds, clean the bodies of both the living and the dead, and keep one's skin and hair healthy. For most ancient peoples, to have oil in the house meant that food and health could be had in abundance, and that life was good!

The Israelites also used this commodity liturgically. Oil was used to mark priests, prophets and kings, indicating that they were called by God in special ways. It was also used to sanctify altars and vessels in the Temple.

This act of marking someone or something with oil, called *anointing*, has a particular relevance for us as Christians. Our very name "Christian" means "follower of the anointed one".



Today, there are three oils used in our Catholic tradition, all of which are consecrated at a special Chrism Mass on the morning of Holy Thursday. During this Mass, the congregation brings three containers of oil to the bishop, who breathes on them and blesses them for special use:

- The first, the **Oil of Catechumens**, is mentioned by St. Hippolytus around 215 A.D. in his work *Apostolic Tradition*. He writes that ministers use oil to mark those who are about to be baptized, saying, "We anoint you with the oil of salvation in the name of Christ our Savior; may He strengthen you with His power, who lives and reigns forever and ever." Today we do the same.
- The second, the **Oil of the Infirm**, is used in the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. This oil is used to bring physical and spiritual healing to those who struggle with illness or are in danger of death. St. James commands the use of such oil in the New Testament: "Is there anyone sick among you? He should ask for the priests of the church. They in turn are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the Name of the Lord. This prayer uttered in faith will reclaim the one who is ill, and the Lord will restore him to health. If he has committed any sins, forgiveness will be his" (*Jas 5:14-15*).
- The third, the **Holy Chrism**, is mixed with the resin of the balsam tree to give it a strong, sweet smell. This oil is used on the newly baptized, confirmed and ordained. The three sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders permanently mark the soul of the recipient, and the fragrance of the oil is a sign of this change. This oil is also used to dedicate new altars and churches.

It is our hope that we will be able to display these three sacred oils in beautiful ambry, either adjacent to the baptismal font or the confessionals, so that all may see them and be reminded that God has truly anointed us with the "oil of gladness" when He called us by name to be His children (*Psalms 45:8*).