

Chants for Blessing of the Holy Oils and Parish Reception of the Holy Oils

As reported in the November-December 2018 *Newsletter*, *The Order of Blessing the Oil of Catechumens and of the Sick and of Consecrating the Chrism* will be implemented on Ash Wednesday, March 6, 2019, and thus be used at the Chrism Mass from this year forward. To aid bishops, pastoral musicians, and others, the Secretariat of Divine Worship has posted free PDF downloads of the chant settings found in the ritual book, along with basic catechesis on the rite. (The PDF of the hymn *O Redemptor* might be especially useful for inclusion in worship aids.) The webpage is found at USCCB.org/holyoils. The ritual edition itself will be sold exclusively by USCCB Communications and be released in early March 2019.

After the holy oils are blessed at the Chrism Mass, they are distributed to the parishes of the diocese. According to the Roman Missal, “[t]he reception of the Holy Oils may take place in individual parishes either before the celebration of the Evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper or at another time that seems more appropriate” (Chrism Mass, no. 15). This rubric does not specify how a “reception of the Holy Oils” would take place. The Church, therefore, permits pastors some latitude in determining the best way for it to be carried out in their parishes, should they wish to do so. A simple ceremony that is sober yet joyful, consistent with the style of the Roman liturgy, and emphasizing the grace of the sacraments and unity with the bishop, would seem to be the most appropriate way to receive the oils in a parish.

One possible model is found in the *Order for the Reception of the Holy Oils*, which was approved by the Holy See for optional use in the dioceses of the United States in 1989 as part of its *ad interim* confirmation of the *Book of Blessings*. A revised version of this rite, with a suggested move of the reception to the offertory procession and introducing dialogue between the priest and the congregation, was drafted and approved by the NCCB during the 1990s revision of the *Sacramentary*. In anticipation of its confirmation, the text was published in the *Sacramentary Supplement* (1994, reprinted 2004) and appeared on the USCCB website for a number of years. However, that revised *Sacramentary*—and the proposed revision for the reception of the holy oils—was never confirmed by the Holy See. No version of the ritual was proposed when the *Roman Missal, Third Edition* was approved, but given the flexibility of the current Missal, either of these earlier versions of the reception might be taken as a template for a parish celebration. Since the 1989 version once had the approval of the Holy See, it is posted on the USCCB website via the link above and is reprinted below for the benefit of our readers:

Introduction

1. It is appropriate that the Oil of the Sick, the Oil of Catechumens, and the holy Chrism which are blessed by the Bishop during the Chrism Mass be presented to and received by the local parish community.
2. The presentation of the holy Oils may take place at the Mass of the Lord’s Supper on Holy Thursday or, if the Oils are not blessed on Holy Thursday, on another day,
3. The oils should be reserved in a suitable repository in the presbyterium or near the baptismal font.

Reception of the Holy Oils

4. The Oils, in suitable vessels, are carried in the Entrance Procession by ministers or other persons. The vessels of oil are placed on a table which has been prepared for them in the sanctuary. The Priest may incense the Oils after he has incensed the altar.

5. After the Greeting of the Mass the Priest may briefly explain the significance of the blessing of the Oils and their use. The Oils are then placed in the repository where they are to be reserved and the Mass continues in the usual manner.
6. The following, or other words, may be used to explain the significance of the Oils:

Oil of the Sick

This Oil of the Sick has been blessed by our Bishop for the healing of body, mind, and soul. May the sick, who are anointed with it, experience the compassion of Christ and his saving love.

Oil of Catechumens

This Oil of Catechumens has been blessed by our Bishop for the anointing of those preparing for Baptism. Through this anointing they are strengthened by Christ to resist the power of Satan and reject evil in all its forms, as they prepare for the saving waters of Baptism.

Holy Chrism

This holy Chrism, a mixture of olive oil and perfume, has been consecrated by our Bishop and the Priests of our Diocese. It will be used to anoint infants after Baptism, those who are to be confirmed, Bishops and Priests at their Ordination, and altars and churches at the time of their dedication.

© 1988 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, DC. All rights reserved.