

THE CARE AND RECEPTION OF THE SACRED OILS

Only the Sacred Oils blessed at the Chrism Mass are to be used in the following year. The new oils are to be received by the parish before the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday, and the old oils are to be disposed of properly.

How are the oils to be received?

A rite for the Reception of the Holy Oils can be found at the USCCB's website: <http://usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgical-year/triduum/reception-of-holy-oils.cfm>.

Following a new rubric for the Chrism Mass (Roman Missal, Chrism Mass, #15), the USCCB now indicates that the reception of the oils is to take place either (1) before the start of the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday or (2) on another day after the celebration of the Chrism Mass.¹ Regardless, the oils should no longer be presented as part of the Liturgy of the Eucharist, either before or with the bread and wine. A suggested ritual text is given at the USCCB website above; an alternate text is given below (since the rubrics allow for the use of alternate words).

How are the oils to be disposed of reverently?

The Sacred Oils from the past year are to be burned—either in an oil-burning sanctuary light or in another oil lamp in the church, or in the new fire at the Easter Vigil. If such burning is not possible, the oils may be buried in the ground in a place that is unlikely to be disturbed.

What if we run out of oil during the year?

In the first place, there is no reason to anticipate that a parish would ever be without the Oil of Catechumens or Oil of the Sick: the priest may always bless oil for a particular celebration (note: such oil is not to be “stored” like oil blessed at the Chrism Mass; it is disposed of after the rite for which it was blessed in the manner described above). The Bishop will always bring chrism for confirmation, so having a sufficient supply of that oil should not be a problem.

What if there is a real emergency?

As mentioned above, it is the intention of the Church that the Sacred Oils are to be replaced each year with a fresh supply blessed at the Chrism Mass. Therefore, there really should be no recourse to “old oils” that are kept around. If for some reason oils from the previous year are available, they may validly (but not licitly) be used in a true emergency. In extreme situations, more oil may validly (though not licitly) be added to the blessed oil to increase its volume—as long as the unblessed oil makes up less than 50% of the resulting mixture. However, this should not be done except *in necessity* (and not, for example, just to increase the amount of oil in the vessel for the sake of appearance). The provision applies to all three oils.

Bottom line: replace the oils; bless more for particular rites if needed (except for Chrism, of course); don't plan on adding more.

¹ The rubrics are not very specific. If option (2) is chosen, the oils may be received before or after Mass. It is even possible to receive the oils as part of another liturgy (such as Vespers). In the Diocese of Davenport, because the Chrism Mass is celebrated 10 days before Holy Thursday, the reception of the oils at some other earlier liturgy may be appropriate.

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A Rite for Receiving the Sacred Oils Before Mass

Pastor: My brothers and sisters,
we have completed our Lenten observance
and now have begun the solemn celebration of the Paschal feast.
On these great days
it is our duty to glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ
in whom we have salvation, life and resurrection.
These oils we receive tonight were blessed and consecrated at the Chrism Mass
by Martin, our bishop,
for use throughout the year.
With them the sick will be anointed,
those awaiting the waters of rebirth will be strengthened,
and those who are baptized and confirmed will share the mission of Christ,
the Anointed One.
By the outpouring of the Holy Spirit,
who fills these holy oils with life and grace,
the saving work of Jesus Christ is continued in the Church.

Deacon: Behold the oil of the sick: receive God's grace and healing.

*•The person carrying the oil of the sick moves up and gives the oil to the priest.
Priest lifts it up and then gives it back to the person, who places it in the ambry.
Meanwhile, the appropriate response is sung: (for example, a sung Amen)*

Deacon: Behold the oil of the catechumens: receive God's strength and wisdom.

*•The person carrying the oil of the sick moves up and gives the oil to the priest.
Priest lifts it up and then gives it back to the person, who places it in the ambry.
Meanwhile, the appropriate response is sung: (for example, a sung Amen)*

Deacon: Behold the Sacred Chrism: give thanks, O priestly people.

*•The person carrying the oil of the sick moves up and gives the oil to the priest.
Priest lifts it up and then gives it back to the person, who places it in the ambry.
Meanwhile, the appropriate response is sung: (for example, a sung Amen)*

The Mass then begins as usual.