

Why I Am Catholic

The Holy oils.

Blessed oil is used for four of the seven sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, Anointing of the Sick, and the Ordination of Priests and Bishops.

For Baptisms, Confirmations, and Ordinations, the Church uses Sacred Chrism (SC), perfumed oil that has been used to consecrate kings, priests, and prophets for centuries. A few weeks ago we read of the consecration of King David: "Then Samuel, with the horn of oil in hand, anointed him in the midst of his brothers. . ." (I Sam 16:13)

We also have the Oil of Catechumens (OC) or Oil of Salvation (OS), which is used in the sacrament of baptism. With babies, it is used for the first anointing near the heart. The priest or deacon prays: "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 for ever and ever."

The Oil of the Infirm (OI) is used only for the Anointing of the Sick. Olive oil is mixed with balsam (a type of wood with proven healing qualities). Note that the words balsam and balm are related. Remember the song: "There is a Balm in Gilead that heals the sin-sick soul."

Each year, the Chrism Mass (for the Blessing of Oils) is held at each diocese's cathedral during Holy Week.