

TOGETHER

a monthly bulletin insert from the archdiocese



ARCHDIOCESE
of DUBUQUE

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Embracing Tradition: Inviting All to the Cathedral's Chrism Mass

The Cathedral of St. Raphael is the mother church of the Archdiocese of Dubuque and serves as a place of worship for major events, including the Chrism Mass.

The Chrism Mass is held during Holy Week in every Catholic Diocese around the world. The local bishop gathers the people to bless and consecrate the Holy Oils for the year: Oil of the Sick, Oil of Catechumens, and Sacred Chrism. The Holy Oils are then distributed throughout the diocese, often kept in an ambry near the baptismal font of the church.

Our ancestors used olive oil for healing, sealing, and strengthening. The oil was used to anoint prophets to give them power and authority to speak God's name. These prophets, in turn, anointed kings to rule God's people. The anointing indicated to the people that God's favor rested on the chosen one as God's servant as a king. (Psalm 45:9,

"God your God has anointed you with the oil of gladness...")

The Hebrew word for one who is anointed is "messiah". Translated into Greek, the language of the new Testament, "messiah" becomes "christos", or Christ. Jesus Christ is anointed by God as priest, prophet, and king.

Oil of the Catechumens

Catechumens are unbaptized persons who desire to be fully incorporated into the Catholic Church through the Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Eucharist. The Oil of Catechumens is utilized in the sacrament of Baptism, and may also be administered during the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). We anoint catechumens with this oil to strengthen them in the fight against darkness and seal them in grace for the journey to initiation. The Oil of Catechumens offers the elect gifts of wisdom, courage, and strength to live the Gospel as it purifies them from sin before baptism.

Oil of the Sick

The Anointing of the Sick with the blessed sacred oil is a sign of outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the person who is sick. It is meant to unite the sick person to the passion of Christ, give the sick person strength, provide courage in enduring illness or old age, prepare for healing if it is conducive to the salvation of the soul, and to help the sick person in preparation for passing over to eternal life. Those who receive anointing with the Oil of the Sick receive God's blessing, as the prayer of blessing says, "so that they may be freed from pain and illness and made well again in body, mind and soul."

Sacred Chrism

"The Holy Chrism consecrated by the bishop is used to anoint the newly baptized, to seal the candidates for confirmation, and to anoint the hands of presbyters and the heads of bishops at their ordination..." (Ceremonial of Bishops, 274). It is also used to anoint church altars, and in the dedication of a church building because a church's building represents the anointed members of the Church - the people of the Body of Christ.

The History of the Chrism Mass

The earliest recording of this rite was by Hippolytus (a bishop of Rome and early Christian theologian) in the early 200s, who wrote a ceremony during the Easter Vigil at which two holy oils were blessed and one was consecrated. In the 5th century, the ceremony was moved from the Easter Vigil to Holy Thursday. However, due to practical reasons, many dioceses choose to celebrate the Mass on another day of Holy Week, since it involves travel that may be some distance for pastors. In the Archdiocese of Dubuque, the Chrism Mass is held on the Tuesday of Holy Week each year.

The oils consecrated or blessed during the Mass signify the presence of the archbishop in the presence of the parish whenever the oils are utilized. The Oil of the Catechumens and the Oil of the Sick are blessed, while the Sacred Chrism is consecrated when the bishop or archbishop invokes the power of the Holy Spirit in blessing upon the oil.

The order of the Mass is as follows: first, the procession of the oils to be blessed or consecrated. Next, the blessing of the Oil of the Sick, followed by the Blessing of the Oil of Catechumens. The high point of the ritual is the Consecration of the Chrism.

The Mass is a celebration of the priesthood, with Jesus' words at the Last Supper, "Do this in memory of me." Sacred Chrism is a sign of the Holy Spirit, and before saying the Prayer of Consecration, the bishop or archbishop breathes upon the opening of the vessel of the Chrism. This action signifies the Spirit of God "moving over the face of the waters" at creation and Jesus' resurrection appearance to the disciples in which "he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'" (Jn 20:22). Afterward, the bishop or archbishop invites those gathered to pray in silence before the Consecration of the Sacred Chrism.

After the Mass, the oils are distributed to be used in each parish community over the next year.

"The Chrism Mass is one of my favorite Masses of the year. It is a profound and powerful liturgical experience of the local church: the gathering together of the priests, deacons and representatives of the entire archdiocesan community to worship God as we prepare to celebrate the Sacred Triduum. And best of all, their participation is full, conscious and active!"

- Archbishop Thomas Zinkula

The Chrism Mass, which [the Bishop] concelebrates with Priests from various regions of the diocese and during which he consecrates the sacred Chrism and blesses the other oils, is among the principal manifestations of the fullness of the Bishop's Priesthood and is considered to be a sign of the close bond of the Priests with him. For it is with the sacred Chrism consecrated by the Bishop that the newly baptized are anointed and those to be confirmed are signed. It is with the Oil of Catechumens that catechumens are prepared and disposed for Baptism. Finally, it is with the Oil of the Sick that those who are ill are comforted in their infirmity.

— *The Order of Blessing the Oil of Catechumens and of the Sick and of Consecrating the Chrism (OBO), no. 1*

The Chrism Mass in the Archdiocese of Dubuque

Each year in the Archdiocese of Dubuque, the Archbishop concelebrates the Chrism Mass with the priests of the archdiocese. This year, Archbishop Zinkula will be celebrating the Mass in a different role than the last time he celebrated the Chrism Mass in

the Archdiocese of Dubuque - now leading the Mass as Archbishop. The concelebration of this Mass is a way of demonstrating the communion of the priests with the archbishop, and during the liturgy, priests renew the promises they made during their ordination.

"The Chrism Mass, which is celebrated during Holy Week, is one of my favorite Masses of the year. One reason it is a highlight for me is because at this Mass the oils that will be used in the archdiocese during the coming year are consecrated (Sacred Chrism) and blessed (Oil of Catechumens and Oil of the Sick). After the Mass, the Holy Oils are brought back to the parishes of the archdiocese," Archbishop Zinkula explains.

"It also is a joy to witness the concelebrating priests of the archdiocese renew their priestly promises at this Mass. Finally, it is a profound and powerful liturgical experience of the local church: the gathering together of the priests, deacons and representatives of the entire archdiocesan community to worship God as we prepare to celebrate the Sacred Triduum. And best of all, their participation is full, conscious and active!"

Invitation to Attend the Chrism Mass

Anyone is welcome to attend the Chrism Mass at the Cathedral of St. Raphael in Dubuque. The Mass is held at 2 p.m. on Tuesday, March 26.

ArchdioceseOne Cathedral Update

Over \$17.5 million has been raised for the ArchdioceseOne special appeal. \$2.4 million has been restricted to Cathedral repairs and upgrades. There is still a great need to support the Cathedral to complete the work, as the goal of \$11 million was not met. If you are in a position to give, gifts can be made online at www.archdioceseone.org/support, or mailed to ArchdioceseOne, 1229 Mt. Loretta Ave, Dubuque, IA 52003.