

THE HOLY CHRISM

Its History & Origin

References:

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Notes For Servants:

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Objectives:

General: Learn about Chrismation.

Specific:

1. Study the history of anointing.
2. Learn about the use of the holy Chrism.
3. Understand the work of the Holy Spirit in the Holy Chrism.

Instructions:

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Bible Verse:

**“But ye have an unction from the Holy One,
and ye know all things.”**

(I John 2:20)

Lesson:

The Constituents of the Chrism:

The Chrism is a substance, the knowledge of which requires experience. Some of the constituents of the Chrism were mentioned in the making of the oil of anointing in the Old Testament book of Exodus.

The Lord said to Moses the prophet: "Take for yourself quality spices -five hundreds shekels of liquid myrrh, half as much sweet-smelling cinnamon ... two hundred and fifty shekels of sweet-smelling cane, five hundred shekels of cassia, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, and a hin of olive oil, an ointment compounded according to the art of the perfumer It shall be a holy anointing oil ... It shall not be poured on man's flesh; nor shall you make any other like it, according

to its composition. It is holy, and it shall be holy to you. Whoever puts any of it on an outsider, shall be cut off from his people" (Exodus 30:22-33).

The kinds of such incenses have amounted to twenty-six types which were determined by the fathers, to which is added pure olive oil, as well as the ferment of the Chrism remaining from the spices which were over the body of the Lord Jesus Christ, Glory be to Him.

These spices were mentioned along with the things that Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus had brought. They were also mentioned in the Bible in the following lines: "And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is in burying" (John 19:38-40).

The History of the Chrism:

The apostles and disciples of Christ were the first to make the Holy Chrism, as referred to in (John 2:20 and 27) after which, Saint Mark brought some of it to Egypt. It is stated in history that Saint Athanasius also made the Chrism. The making of the Chrism has continued consecutively during the ages of the popes of Alexandria, the successors of Saint Mark. This third time for making the Chrism in our era is the thirtieth time as recorded in the manuscripts in our hands. There might have been other occurrences which either were not recorded by history, or did not reach us.

The Use of the Holy Anointing:

1- *The Anointing Oil was used in anointing the house of God:* When God commanded Moses to make the anointing oil, He told him: "With it you shall anoint the tabernacle of meeting and the ark of Testimony; the table and all its utensils, the lamp stand and its utensils, and the altar of incense; the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils and the laver and its base. You shall sanctify them, that they may be most holy; whatever touches them must be holy" (Exodus 30:26-29).

May be the origin of the anointing oil is found in Jacob's dedication of the First house of God in history. It is narrated in the Book of Genesis that after Jacob had seen a ladder which was set up on earth with its top reaching up to heaven, and the angels of God ascending and descending on it, he said: "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!" Then Jacob "took the stone that he had put at his head, set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on top of it. And he called the name of that place Bethel" (Genesis 28:10-19).

2- *The Anointing Oil was used in anointing priests, kings and prophets:* God said to Moses: "And you shall anoint Aaron and his sons, and sanctify them, that they may minister to Me as priests" (Exodus 30:30). It is also mentioned in Exodus 40:9-16 that "... you shall take the anointing oil, and anoint the tabernacle and all that is in it; and you hallow it and all its utensils, and it shall be holy. You shall anoint the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, and sanctify the altar. The altar shall be most holy ... Then you shall bring Aaron and his sons to the door of the tabernacle of meeting and wash them with water. You shall put the holy garments of Aaron, and anoint him and sanctify him, that he may minister to Me as priest. And you shall bring his sons and clothe them with tunics. You shall anoint them, as you anointed their father, that they may minister to Me as priests; for their anointing shall surely be an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations. Thus Moses did; according to all that the lord had commanded him, so he did.

All this consequently took place, as the Bible says: "Then Moses took the anointing oil, and anointed the tabernacle and all that was in it, and sanctified them. He sprinkled some of it on the altar seven times, anointed the altar and all its utensils ... And he poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron's head and anointed him to sanctify him" (Leviticus 8: 10,12), and "Then Moses took some of the anointing oil and some of the blood which was on the altar, and sprinkled it on Aaron, on his garments, on his sons, and on the garments of his sons with him; and he sanctified Aaron, his

garments, his sons, and the garments of his sons with him" (Leviticus 8:30).

The anointing of Aaron as High Priest was recorded in the Book of Psalms, as the Psalmist says: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious oil upon the head, running down on the beard, the beard of Aaron, running down on the edge of his garments" (Psalm 133:1 &2).

As for the Anointing of kings, the anointing of Saul, David and Jehu can be given as examples.

The anointing of Saul is mentioned in I Samuel 10:1; "Then Samuel took a flash of oil and poured it on his head, and kissed him." As a result of this anointing, the Bible says that Saul, after he was anointed king, that "when he had turned his back to go from Samuel...God gave him another heart; ... then the Spirit of God came upon him and he prophesied ... that the people said to one another: Is Saul also among the prophets?" (1 Samuel 10.-9-11).

The Spirit of God also came upon David after he was anointed king by Samuel (I Samuel 16:13). As for the anointing of Hazael and Jehu, the Lord said to the prophet Elijah: "Anoint Hazael as King over Syria. Also you shall anoint Jehu the son of Namshi as King over Israel" (I Kings 19:15 & 16).

The anointing of prophets is clear in Elijah's anointing of Elisha. The Lord said to Elijah on the same occasion: "And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place (1 Kings 19:16).

The Anointing of the Lord Jesus Christ:

The Lord Jesus Christ was anointed king, priest and prophet. There is a prophecy concerning this matter in the Book of Isaiah, as the prophet says: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good things to the poor; He has sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to captives ..." (Isaiah 61:1). In the Epistle to the Hebrews, Saint Paul the apostle says about the Lord that God has anointed Him with the oil of gladness more than His companions (Hebrews 1:9). Saint Paul took the quotation regarding this anointing from Psalm 45:7. Following this quotation, it is mentioned in the Psalm that all the Lord's garments are scented with myrrh and aloes and cassia.

The name of 'Christ' might have been derived from the term 'Chrismation'. Moreover, we are called Christians' because we believe in Christ and because we have accepted His Holy Chrismation.

The Work of the Holy Spirit in Chrismation:

1- Through Chrismation, man becomes a temple of the Holy Spirit. On this, Saint Paul says: "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are" (1 Corinthians 3:16 & 17). He also says: "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?" (1 Corinthians 6:19).

2- The Holy Spirit gives man power. Concerning this power, the Lord said to His disciples: "Behold, I sent you the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). This power from on high is the power of the Holy Spirit. That is why He said to them: "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to me" (Acts 1:8).

3- The Lord explains the work of the Holy Spirit in His long speech to the disciples. This speech, which was recorded by John the Evangelist, took three chapters or his Gospel, namely, chapters 14,15,16. The Lord said to His disciples that the Holy Spirit will dwell in them and abide with them forever (John 14:16,17). He told them that the Holy Spirit is the "Helper" (15:26), and that he will

"convict the world,...will guide [them] into all truth (and)...will tell (them) of things to come" (16:8,13). He also told them that the Spirit will teach them all things and bring to their remembrance all that He had said to them (14:26).

4- Saint Paul the apostle explains the gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12, and the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22,23. As for the work of the Spirit in the Church and the Sacraments, and our attitude towards the Spirit, I think that one article is not enough for covering them. Nor is one article enough for talking about oil and its symbolism in the Bible.

Conclusion:

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