



Parent Pages

*Preparing the environment of the Domestic Church**

* The term "Domestic Church" refers to the family, the smallest body of gathered believers in Christ. Though recovered only recently, the term dates back to the first century AD. The Greek word *ecclesiola* referred to "little church." The early Church understood that the home was fertile ground for discipleship, sanctification, and holiness.

The Consecration of the Chrism and the Elementary Child

The History of the Kingdom of God, Part I, by Sofia Cavalletti, begins by stating: "A plan has always existed in the mind of God, the aim of which is to bring humankind to the full enjoyment of God." This beautiful plan for humanity includes all of creation as participants, each element with a particular role in this plan. Thus, the mineral world, plant and animal kingdoms, and each individual person is invited to participate in this plan which leads towards Parousia, the moment when "God will be all in all" (1 Corinthians 15:28).



The Olive Tree in Creation

Long before humanity appeared on the earth, there were plants growing in the oceans and covering vast portions of the land. Plants with seeds in them and fruit bearing trees are mentioned in Genesis 1:11-12 as being created "on the third day." So early in the history of our world God had already filled the earth with gifts which one day humankind would discover, use, and transform. Plants would be used for food, clothing, medicine, healing, and would bring great joy in their variety of shape, color, texture, and beautiful fragrances. Each plant would have a purpose, a way to exist as gift to the animals and especially to men and women of all ages. One of these plants was the Olive Tree. From the beginning, this tree was created for humanity to discover and enjoy, eating the fruit of its branches and pressing that same fruit into olive oil which would provide medicine, cleansing, fuel, and nourishment.

Oil in Salvation History

While all of these uses of the olive plant are good, there was an even higher purpose for which this gift was intended from the very beginning. Olive oil would be used throughout Salvation History for anointings of objects and people that they might be consecrated and made holy, set apart for God.

- **Exodus 30:22-25:** A specific recipe for "sacred anointing oil" is given, specifying the spices which are to be added.
- **Leviticus 8:10:** The tabernacle, altar, basin, and other items of worship are anointed by Moses. Aaron, too, is anointed with the oil, to consecrate him and set him apart for his priestly role.

- **Isaiah 61:1:** Isaiah is also anointed, by God through His Spirit, to be a prophet to the nations.
- **1 Samuel 16:13:** Samuel, the prophet, anoints David as king of Israel, and “from that day on, the spirit of the LORD rushed upon David.”



Sacred Chrism in the Liturgy

Sacred Chrism follows the pattern set by creation and the Scriptures for its purpose and use. One day out of the year the Bishops and priests gather together for the blessing of the oil of catechumens and the oil of the sick. On this day Sacred Chrism, to which spices, including balsam, are added, is consecrated. Whenever this particular oil is used in anointing a place or object it will be set aside for the purpose of worship of God. Whenever this particular oil is used in anointing a person, an indelible mark, deep in that person’s soul, is placed, setting this person aside as conformed to Christ and living each moment in worship of Him. In the consecration prayer over the Sacred Chrism there are beautiful signs which draw us to ponder the greatness of this gift.

- The Bishop breathes upon the opening of the vessel containing the Chrism.
- With hands extended, the Bishop says the Prayer of Consecration.
- In the prayer, David, Moses and Aaron, and Jesus at His baptism by John are all referenced, lifting up the role of oil and of the Holy Spirit, side by side, in Salvation History.
- All priests who are present extend their right hands over the Chrism as the Bishop continues the verbal prayer within which he also makes the Sign of the Cross over the sacred oil.

The Sacred Chrism, now consecrated, is sent throughout the diocese to be used in the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and the Ordination of Priests and Bishops. “The balsam, that together with oil makes up the Chrism, is a perfume. This makes explicit that those who have been anointed with Chrism are called to be the “good fragrance of Christ”: Christians’ actions must make one think of the invisible presence of Christ in them” (Chapter 12, *The History of the Kingdom of God, Part II*). It will also be used to consecrate churches and sacred articles of the Mass including patens and chalices.

Sacred Chrism and the Elementary Child

- Read the passages cited above and reflect on role of priest, prophet, and king.
- Compare the consecration of Chrism to the blessing of water from the Easter Vigil.
- Find citations for “breath” and/or “anointing” in the Bible.
- Research the use of Chrism in consecrating people and articles.
- Attend the Chrism Mass in your diocese which is often celebrated on the morning of Holy Thursday or near Holy Week.
- Witness a Baptism, Confirmation, or Ordination. Look for the placement of the anointing with Sacred Chrism. Is the person anointed on the head? The hands? What might be the significance?

