

mirrors this same act in Baptism, to guard individuals from the clutches of Satan. This is an important distinction and effects the spiritual, mental and physical wellbeing of the individuals involved, as through the act of Baptism, participants are initiated into the life of the Church. They become Christians and are called to be “Christ-like”.

The Service of Holy Unction

In the Orthodox Church we also bless oil during the Mystery of Holy Unction. This special service can be celebrated any time during the year however it is more commonly held on Wednesday night of Holy Week. During the service there are seven Gospel and New testament readings, combined with prayers for the blessing of the oil. The number seven is significant as it represents ‘perfection’, in which we are reminded of the only perfect One, Christ, the ultimate healer of soul and body.

During the service, prayers are also

read by the priest asking God for forgiveness on behalf of all who are present. At the end of the service all who are present approach and are blessed by the priest with Holy Oil. The priest recites these lines: “The blessing of our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ: for the healing of the soul and body of the servant of God, [name], always, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen”. The faithful are then given some oil, usually on a cotton bud to take home. Holy Unction oil is used for the anointing of the sick. Normally, it would be smeared on a sick individual in the form of a cross: from top to bottom, then side to side. Then a prayer is offered so that Jesus Christ may heal the individual.

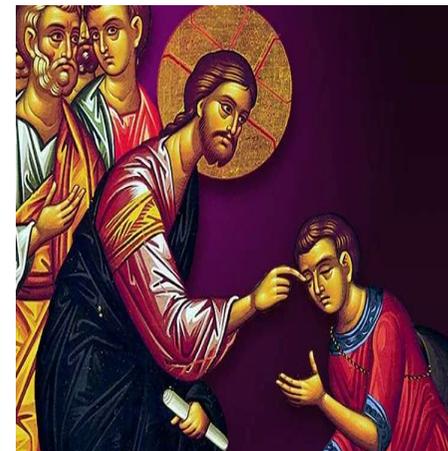
The Sacrament of Holy Unction is for the healing of both body and soul, strengthening one’s faith and giving them consolation, patience and endurance over their sickness.

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HOLY UNCTION



Holy Unction

Holy Unction is one of the 'mysteries' in the Orthodox Christian Church. It is a Sacrament, a Holy Gift, in which the Holy Spirit sanctifies oil and turns it into a Holy substance, a substance which is 'set apart'. This oil is then often distributed to the faithful and is mainly used for anointing, blessing and healing.

The word 'oil' can be linked to the Greek word used for Mercy, '*Elaion*'. As faithful, by using the Holy Oil we are calling upon God's mercy, who is in essence the Creator, the projector of richness and mercy, the healer of both soul and body. Thus, it is Jesus Christ who heals, not the substance itself. We are reminded about this every time we use the words "Messiah" and "Christ", in reference to Jesus, as both words mean the "Anointed One".

Old Testament

In the Old Testament God tells the children of Israel to use Holy Oil to

consecrate ministers and priests, such as Aaron and his sons. (Exodus 30:30-31) We also find in Psalm 88:21 a reference to King David being anointed by Holy Oil. An interesting note to be made here, is that until this present day when Bishops and Priests place their stole around their neck, they say a prayer in reference to this passage. The prayer reads, "Blessed is God, who pours out His grace upon His Chief Priests, as ointment upon the head, which runs down upon the beard, the beard of Aaron, which runs down to the hem of his garment".

New Testament

In the Gospel according to St Mark, Jesus sends out his twelve disciples to begin administering to the community, In Mark 6: 12-13, it says "So they went out and preached that people should repent. And they cast out many demons, and *anointed with oil* many who were sick, and healed them." This action of being 'sent out' is further elaborated upon in the book

of the Acts of the Apostles. The clergy were ordained by the "laying on of hands", which gave them a special blessing to go out and anoint, bless and heal the sick.

St James also writes about the use of Holy Oil in the Bible. He prompts his audience by asking: "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord" (James 5:14)

Holy Oil and Its Use During Baptism

During the Sacrament of Baptism Christians are also anointed with oil. This oil is commonly known as the "Oil of Gladness". Oil is placed all over the individual, mostly on the forehead, chest, ears, mouth, nose, hands, knees, feet and back.

During the time of the first Olympics, wrestlers would cover themselves in oil. This made it difficult for their opponents to catch them. The Church