

Chrism is made by **blending pure olive oil and balsam**. It is blessed by a bishop in a special manner or by a priest recognized by the Holy See, the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Catholic Church in Rome. Using the oil represents an anointing by the Holy Spirit. Jan 18, 2017

The Catholic Spirit

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Anointing with oil during confirmation

The Catholic Spirit | Father Michael Van Sloun | August 26, 2020 | [0 Comments](#)

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A special kind of oil, sacred chrism, is an integral part of the celebration of the sacrament of confirmation. The minister dips his right thumb into a small bowl of chrism, then raises his oiled thumb, places it on the forehead of the candidate, and with a stroke down and a stroke across, anoints the forehead in the shape of a cross with the words, “Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit.” The anointing with holy oil imparts the seal of the sacrament.

The sacred chrism (s.c., *sacrum chrisma*) that is used for confirmation is a sacramental, a blessed substance. It is one of three types of holy oil, along with the oil of the catechumens (o.c., *oleum catechumenorum*) and the oil of the sick (o.i., *oleum infirmorum*). All three holy oils are blessed by the bishop at the annual chrism Mass, distributed to the parishes throughout the diocese, and often reserved in a special repository called an ambry. In addition to its use for confirmation, sacred chrism is also used for baptism and holy orders and to consecrate sacred objects such as an altar, chalice, paten or church building.

Olive oil is the preferred oil for sacred chrism, although any kind of vegetable oil may be used. Balsam, a fragrant substance, is often added to give it a sweet-smelling aroma.

An anointing with oil has many layers of symbolism both in sacred Scripture and in ancient society. Kings were installed, consecrated or raised to their high office with an anointing of oil: Saul by Samuel (1 Sm 10:1), David by the elders of Israel (2 Sm 5:3), and Solomon by Nathan the prophet and Zadok the priest (1 Kgs 1:34, 39). People who are confirmed are consecrated and raised to a new and greater spiritual status, dedicated to God, called to a unique vocation, given the power and authority to take control of their lives, acknowledge Jesus as their king, dedicate their lives to him, embrace his mission, share in his work and give witness to him.

An anointing with oil is a seal that connotes ownership. Military officers anointed their soldiers. Masters anointed their slaves. People anointed during confirmation belong to God, offer their lives in service to God and willingly agree to take their orders from God and obey them.

Soldiers were anointed before going to war, wrestlers before going into the ring and gladiators before facing an opponent. The anointing made their muscles glisten with the appearance of power and strength, thus intimidating their opponent, and it made them slippery, which made it easier to escape the grasp of their adversary. When people are confirmed, they are given strength for the

battles to come, the daily confrontation with the devil, temptation, wrongdoers and those who oppose Jesus, his Gospel, goodness and truth. Not only does the oil give strength to fight sin with valor and courage, it soothes muscles wearied by battle fatigue and gives relief, and promotes healing to the cuts and gashes suffered in war with the darkness.

Oil is also a sign of worship (Ex 25:6b), light (Ex 27:20), nourishment (Ex 29:2; Ez 16:13), an abundant harvest (1 Kgs 5:25) and how God provides (1 Kgs 17:12-16). It is a sign of cleansing (Ru 3:3; Ez 16:9), care for another (2 Chr 28:15), tithing (Tb 1:7), a seat at the eternal banquet (Ps 23:5), gladness (Ps 45:8; Is 61:3; Heb 1:9), selection by God (Ps 89:21; Is 61:1; 2 Cor 1:21-22) and the presence and power of the Holy Spirit (Is 61:1; Acts 10:38). It is a sign of repentance (Lk 7:38), welcome (Lk 7:46), healing (Mk 6:13; Lk 10:34), reverence for the body (Mk 16:1), love (Jn 11:2) and respect (Jn 12:3).

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