

Office (Akolouthia) of Holy Oil,

sung by seven priests, who have gathered in the church or in the house.

Sacred Action order

(Book of Needs (Euchologion), chapter 22)

A little table ¹⁾ is prepared, on it is placed a dish of wheat, and on the wheat an empty vigil glass ²⁾, and around the wheat are seven wands wrapped with cotton for anointing ³⁾, and the holy gospel ⁴⁾; also the priests are given lit candles ⁵⁾. Standing around the tetrapod (table), all vested in phelonions ⁶⁾, the first priest takes an incensory (censer) with incense and censes around the table with oil on it ⁷⁾, and all the church or house and the people; and standing in front of the table looking to the east, begins saying:

Blessed is our God...

And we begin ⁸⁾: *the Trisagion Prayers, All Holy Trinity... Our Father... For yours is the Kingdom... Lord, have mercy, 12. Come, let us bow... Three times.*

And **Psalm** 142: *O Lord, hear my prayer... Glory, both now. Alleluia*, three times.

The deacon says the little litany: *Again and again...*

The priest exclaims: *For to you belongs ...*

Choir: *Amen.*

And they sing: *Alleluia*, in tone 6. Verse 1: *O Lord, rebuke me not ...* Verse 2: *Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am languishing.*

Then the **troparia (tropes)**:

Have mercy on us, O Lord... Glory: O Lord, have mercy on us ... Both now: Open to us the doors of your loving kindness...

After this **Psalm** 50: *Have mercy on me, O God...*

And the **canon**, whose acrostic is: The prayer of oil, a song of Arsenius ⁹⁾.

Tone 4. Ode 1. Hirmos: *When of old Israel crossed the red sea ...* ¹⁰⁾.

Then (after the canon) the **stichera**, tone 4:

You have given grace...

Oversee, O Incomprehensible One, from the heavens...

By this holy oil, O God ...

Glory, both now, theotokion:

O most pure palace of the King, O greatly honored one, ...

Then: the Trisagion ... All Holy Trinity ...

After *Our Father... For yours is the kingdom...*

Then the **troparion (trope)**, tone 4:

You alone are a speedy helper, ...

After these the deacon, if there is; if there is none, the principal priests says

This litany: *In peace let us pray to the Lord...*

Then the principal priest says the **Prayer of the Oil** over the vigil lamp. Let it be known that in the Great Church they pour wine instead of water into the vigil lamp of oil sanctification ¹¹⁾.

Let us pray to the Lord. Lord, have mercy.

O Lord, in your mercy and compassion ...

The other priests likewise read this prayer silently with him. ¹²⁾. While this prayer is being said by the priests, are sung

these troparia ¹³⁾, tone 4:

You alone are a speedy helper ... Spiritually blind ... Tone 3: *My soul is paralyzed ...* Tone 2: *As a disciple of the Lord ...* Tone 4: *The only-begotten Word of God the Father ...* Tone 3: *To the people of Myra, O holy one... The world has found in you a champion... O holy victor and healer Panteleimon ...* Tone 8: *O holy unmercenaries ...* Tone 2: *Who shall declare your greatness ...* The Theotokion: *O fervent intercession ...*

Deacon: *Let us attend.* Principal priest: *Peace be to all.* Choir: *And to your spirit.* Deacon: *Wisdom, let us attend.*

Reader: the **prokeimenon**, tone 1: *Let your mercy, O Lord, be upon us ...* Verse: *Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous ...*

The Epistle: *The reading is from the General Epistle of James.*

Let it be known that the Epistle is read by the deacon.

Principal priest: *Peace be to you.*

And to your spirit. Wisdom, let us attend. David's Psalm. *Alleluia.* Tone 8. Verse: *Mercy and justice ...* *The reading is from the Holy Gospel according to St. Luke* ¹⁴⁾. Then (litanies): *Have mercy on us, O God...*

And the exclamation(Ekphonesis): *For you are a merciful God ...*

Choir: *Amen*

Deacon: *Let us pray to the Lord.*

Choir: *Lord, have mercy.*

The priest says the **prayer**: *You are without beginning... and the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven* ¹⁵⁾.

Let it be known that some say this prayer only to here with the exclamation: *For you are merciful and save us.* Others recite the prayer to the end saying: *For You are a great and wonderful God ...* ¹⁶⁾.

And after the prayer, the priest takes one of the cotton swabs, and dips it into holy oil, and **anoints** the sick person, crosswise, on the brows, the nostrils, the cheeks, the lips, the breast, and on both sides of the hand ¹⁷⁾, saying this prayer ¹⁸⁾:

O holy Father, Physician of souls and bodies, who sent your only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who heals every infirmity and delivers from death: heal also Your servant (or, Your handmaiden), name, from infirmities of body and soul which afflict him (her); and enliven him (her) with the grace of your Christ: through the prayers of our All-holy Lady the Theotokos, and ever-virgin Mary, through the intercessions of the honorable heavenly powers ...

This prayer is said by each of the priests, after he has read the gospel and the prayer, as he anoints the infirm with oil ¹⁹⁾.

The deacon says: *Let us attend.*

The second priest: *Peace be to all.*

Choir: *And to your spirit.*

The Prokeimenon in the second tone: *The Lord is my strength ...*

Verse: *The Lord has chastened me sorely ...*

Deacon: *Wisdom!* ... The reading from the Epistle ... to the Romans... Deacon: Let us attend ²⁰).

The reading of the Epistle and the Gospel ²¹). [for the Pericope and verses of the Epistles and the Gospels see p. 631 above] ²²), After the conclusion of this, the sick, having received the Sanctification of Oil, if able, goes among the priests, or supported by others stands or sits. But if he is unable, the priests themselves stand around the bed where he lies. The rector, taking the Holy Gospel, and opening it, with the writing down, lays it on the head of the sick, with all the priests holding the book ²³). The one in charge does not lay on his hand, but reads this prayer out loud ²⁴):

O Holy King, I do not lay my hand on the head of the one that comes to You..., but through your hand, mighty and powerful, which is in this Holy Gospel ²⁵), which my concelebrants hold on the head of Your servant, name, and I pray with them ²⁶).

Taking the gospel from the head of the sick, they give it to him to kiss. And the Deacon says this **Litany**:

Have mercy on us, O God ...

Exclamation: For You are a merciful God ...

Then they sing: *Glory, samoglasen, tone 4:*

As a source of healing...

Both now and ever, same tone:

Look down on the prayers...

Glory both now and ever. Lord, have mercy,

three times. [*Father*], *bless.* .

And the **dismissal**:

May Christ our true God...

And he that receives the Oil with Prayer makes a reverence ²⁷), saying:

Bless me, O Holy Fathers, forgive me a sinner, three times ²⁸).

And having received their blessing and forgiveness from them ²⁹), he departs, thanking God.

Notes

¹) This little table is covered with a church cloth (Archpriest M. Archangelsky, *About the Mystery of Holy Oil*, p. 168).

²) "Vigil lamp" (a vessel, in the form of a lampada) should be "idle", i. e. empty; the oil is poured into it during the time specified by the office (see note 11 below); until this same time the oil is in another open vessel (e. g., a glass); near this vessel with oil is also placed a vessel with red wine (Archpriest M. Archangelsky, *About the Mystery of Holy Oil*, p. 169).

³) The swabs are placed with the ends wrapped in cotton upwards; although there would be more or less seven presbyters, the swabs should be seven - according to the number of anointings (ibid., p. 170).

⁴) Although the gospel Pericope, placed during the consecration of oil, and part of the Book of Needs (Euchologion), but on the table there should be a Gospel as the image of the presence and action of the very Lord Jesus Christ, as this is read in the final prayer of the "Office (Akolouthia)" (ibid., p. 170). - By

the explanation of one, taking up the Holy Cross for the consecration of oil neither in the former nor in the present order is shown, and its kissing neither at the beginning nor during the dismissal of the office is it given and generally by the eastern office it will not be (see ibid. pp.172, 213); but, by the indication of others, on the table, according to the custom we have accepted the custom, the Gospel and the Holy Cross is placed (see Posobiye k Izucheniyu Ustava Bogosluzhenia Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi [Manual for the Study of the Ustav of the Divine Services of the Orthodox Church, p. 693; Archpriest A. Maltsev, *Tain. Prav. Kaf. Vost. Tserkovnyi* [Mysteries of the Orthodox Catholic Eastern Church], p. 453).

⁵) Unlit candles are given to Priests; to light candles, following antiquity, presbyters should before the very consecration (sanctification) of oil, upon termination of singing the Molioben and each of them should extinguish the candle after the fulfillment of the anointing with oil by him; for the lighting concerns the very sacred action of the mystery in the office. - the raising in the wheat, together with the swabs, seven lit candles in not specified in the office, and this becomes as usual, appeared, possibly, owing to the fulfillment of the office, on the need by one priest, that in that case it is necessary to do, that it represented seven in number, of completed mysteries and it has remained the custom of candles held by them. But candles over the oil need to be lighted, according to an ancient order, after the oil is poured in the vigil lamp before the consecration of the oil. During the participation of seven presbyters in fulfillment of the mystery and during the holding of lamps by them, the lighting of candles over the oil is a pious deed. It is necessary to say the same and relating to the holding of candles by the sick and those present at the fulfillment of the mystery. If, due to a lack of candles, it will be impossible to light them over the oil, but also equally to give candles to the sick and those present so that neither presbyters nor the sick, and other present should not have insufficient feelings as this burning is not required in the "The Office" (Archpriest M. Archangelsky, *About the Mystery of Holy Oil*, pp. 170, 172-173). - Obviously that about the sick holding burning candles cannot even be spoken, if the condition of his illness makes this impossible for him.

⁶) Clerics should be in bright epitrachelions (stoles) and phelonions (and not black as some do) so as not to confuse the sick with repose, that they sing the burial service over him "while still alive" (refer to burial below). - Bishops, if they do the consecration of oil, use the little hierarchical vestments (Posobiye k Izucheniyu Ustava Bogosluzhenia Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi [Manual for the Study of the Ustav of the Divine Services of the Orthodox Church, p. 698; Archpriest M. Archangelsky, *About the Mystery of Holy Oil*, p. 712).

⁷) The censuring around the table, by the general order, should be done three times (Archpriest M. Archangelsky, *About the Mystery of Holy Oil*, p. 171).

⁸) See p. 1194 (about the shorter office).

⁹) See p. 1193 (about the refrains for the canon troparia).

¹⁰) As usual, Hirmoses and refrains are sung, but the canon is read by presbyters (Archpriest M. Archangelsky, *About the Mystery of Holy Oil*, p. 178). - The canon is also read by the deacon (see Tserkovnyi Vestnik [Church Messenger] 1895, 7). - According to the Lvov Book of Needs (Euchologion), 1695, after each ode is placed the katabasia: "Raise up your servant from illness, O One plenteous in mercy, for we fervently resort to You, the merciful Deliverer of all, O Lord Jesus". This katabasia is sung in some parish churches in Kiev (Rukovodstvo dlia Sel'skikh Pastyrei [Manual for Village Pastors] 1888, 2). - By the Books of Needs (Euchologions), 1631 and 1651, after the 3rd, 6th and 9th odes of the canon there is a Little Litany (Posobiye k Izucheniyu Ustava Bogosluzhenia Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi [Manual for the Study of the Ustav of the Divine Services of the Orthodox Church, p. 693).

¹¹) This note specifies that now, after the litany, one should definitively prepare the oil for consecration, i. e. the priest (but not the deacon or the reader) should pour in the oil and wine (refer to note 1 on p. 1186) into the until then "vigil lamp" (refer to note 2 above) and to stir them with a spoon (Archpriest M. Archangelsky, *About the Mystery of Holy Oil*, p. 181).

¹²) This prayer in the case of the fulfillment of the mystery by several priests, taking priority should be read, but the other priests should read it at the same time silently (just as, during time of calling down the Holy Spirit on the gifts, in the

Mystery of the Eucharist at a concelebrating service (see p. 716 above), each of them follows the book for this. - According to XV century office described by Simeon of Salonika, all priests after reading of the prayer, made over the oil "the divine sign of the cross"; but in our "Office of the blessing of oil" it is not necessary. (Archpriest M. Archangelsky, *About the Mystery of Holy Oil*, p. 182).

¹³⁾ Though everyone following further the church hymns are also called troparia, but among them is also the kontakion.

¹⁴⁾ In the reading by some priests of each Gospel over the head of the sick, especially the extremely sick, it is impossible to see some kind of strange and unusual practice in our church allowing, as is known, so-called private molieben reading of the Gospel over bent heads of those praying. Obviously, that at the Gospel reading over the head of the sick, it does not follow to lay the holy book on the head of the sick in as much as under the instruction of the Book of Needs (Euchologion), the Holy Gospel should only be put to the head of the sick - at the end of the anointings with oil (Rukovodstvo dlia Sel'skikh Pastyrei [Manual for Village Pastors] 1887, 40).

¹⁵⁾ This second consecration prayer over the oil, as the first (see note 12 above), the first priest reads aloud but the others silently (Archpriest M. Archangelsky, *About the Mystery of Holy Oil*, p. 187).

¹⁶⁾ Although under this note the reading of the second part of the prayer as though it is not honored by obligation, but if there is present no cogent motive (e. g. the nearness of the patient to loss of consciousness) for the omission of this part, then it should also be read; since it is brought into the "Office (Akolouthia)" for reading, instead of for some other reason (ibid., pp. 187-188).

¹⁷⁾ From this list it is apparent that those parts of the body, through which the sin is more conveniently ingrained in the soul of the person, and are anointed by holy oil, in order to make an entrance in them "not going through" and "is unapproachable" "by all the resistant powers" (Ode 4 of the canon., troparion 2). - The custom to anoint the feet of the sick with oil at the anointing with oil is local, observed in some dioceses of southwest Russia and is not obligatory for all pastors of our Church (Rukovodstvo dlia Sel'skikh Pastyrei [Manual for Village Pastors] 1886, 27; for details see 1885, 52-53).

¹⁸⁾ On the basis of the instructions published in 1695 in the Lvov Book of Needs (Euchologion), in the Kiev practice, when the priest anoints the infirm, the choir sings: "Hear us, O Lord, hear us, O Master, hear us, O Holy One" although, however, according to the indicated instruction of the Book of Needs (Euchologion), the priest words says these words. Relative to the anointing with holy oil in the mentioned Book of Needs (Euchologion) it says: "if the first priest, having signed himself with the sign of the cross and also has uttered this verse: "our help is from the Lord, who made the heaven and the earth", and this "hear me, O Lord, hear me, O Master, hear me, O Holy One", takes the cotton swab and dips it into the holy oil, anoints the infirm, saying the prayer: "O Holy Father"... There is still the following additional feature specified by this Book of Need: "Having completed the anointing the priest blesses the right hand of the sick crosswisely, saying: "the Lord will hear you on the day of your sadness, the name of the God of Jacob will protect you". And some old priests in Kiev follow this practice. - In view of the similarity of the Kievan practice with the ancient instructions of the Book of Needs, with all the unity, according to the opinion of the "Rukovodstvo dlia Sel'skikh Pastyrei [Manual for Village Pastors]", it is necessary to adhere to the instructions of this Book of Needs, especially to that now published in the Kievan Great Book of Needs presents its reduction (Rukovodstvo dlia Sel'skikh Pastyrei [Manual for Village Pastors] 1888, 2). But, according to the instruction of others, it agrees with the text of the prayer, the unction should be begin with the words: "also heal your servant", to continue before the glorification of the Holy Trinity, this whole prayer should be said aloud (Archpriest M. Archangelsky, *About the Mystery of Holy Oil*, p. 195; refer to Novaia Skrizhalj [New Stone Tablets].), and there is no place for singing at this time the verse: "Hear us...", (Ts. V. [Church Messenger] 1895, 7). - By the office of the XV century, described by Simeon of Salonika, the priest after the anointing signed the hand of the anointed one, and the anointed one kissed the priest's hand; but according to the present office the blessing of the patient by the priest and the

patient kissing the hand of the one who blesses does not happen (Archpriest M. Archangelsky, *About the Mystery of Holy Oil*, p. 193). - In the Trebnik of Metr. P. Mogila concerning reading the prayer: "O Holy Father...", and the anointing of the sick with oil it says: "Let it be known, O Priest, and dangerously keep, that if he hasn't begun the prayer, that is, O Holy Father: having begun to anoint with the holy oil, but when having come to these words: Heal your servant [name] with this anointing, from the hold of his spiritual and physical diseases. If these words, saying: first anoint the forehead, and nothing quickly, say the whole prayer up to the end"... "Let it be known, O Priest, as one must this prayer, that is, O Holy Father Physician for the soul and the body: study all for memory, and know because it is heavy, more inconveniently, and hold the book in your hands, and look at it while reading, together and anoint" (see Posobiye k Izucheniyu Ustava Bogosluzhenia Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi [Manual for the Study of the Ustav of the Divine Services of the Orthodox Church, 695 p.). - In some places what is practiced is not specified in the Trebnik, but long ago existed the washing of the patient's members anointed with holy oil by the priest. This action is based, as well as the abluion after the anointing, out of reverential respect for the consecrated oil, as to the visible leader of the invisible grace of God. According to the "Rukovodstvo dlia Sel'skikh Pastyrei [Manual for Village Pastors]", it is better to wipe the anointed parts of the body of the patient immediately after the unction and the reading of the completion prayer, than to do this before the reading following each Gospel or at the end of the anointing - when reading the prayer of absolution, not having any justification for this neither in existence nor in Old Russian Trebniks (for more see the Rukovodstvo dlia Sel'skikh Pastyrei [Manual for Village Pastors], 1885, 40, 1887, 40, 42).

¹⁹⁾ I.e. the ending prayer of the mystery of the consecration of oil: "O Holy Father..." is said by that single priest who anoints with oil. And each of the seven priests doing the mystery anoints in turn. The same priest from among the seven, who should anoint the patient with oil, reads the Gospel before this and after this the special prayer about the infirm. Ordinarily, before the Gospel and also before the Epistle says: "Peace be to all", and says the exclamation after the ektenia: "Have mercy on us, O God" (Posobiye k Izucheniyu Ustava Bogosluzhenia Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi [Manual for the Study of the Ustav of the Divine Services of the Orthodox Church, p. 694).

²⁰⁾ According to the "Office" stated in Great Book of Needs, before reading each of the following Epistles "Let us attend" is exclaimed, "Peace be to all", "And to your spirit", "Wisdom, attend", the prokeimenon with its verses, "Wisdom", the announcement of the Epistle, "Let us attend"; and after reading the Epistle - "Peace be to you", "And to your spirit", "Wisdom, attend", "Alleluia" and the alleluarian, "Wisdom, Attend, Let us hear the holy Gospel", the announcement of the Gospel, "Glory to You. O Lord, glory to You", "Let us attend".

²¹⁾ All readings from the Epistle and the Gospel, as well as prayers of anointing with oil and the anointing are seven, in the same order as the first anointing: the reading of the Epistle and the Gospel, then follows: the ektenias and a special prayer, and after it, during the reading of the actualizing prayer, the anointing is done. - After the completion of the first anointing, the first of the presbyters, by custom of our Church, extinguishes his lamp; and at the subsequent anointings the lamps one by one are extinguished by each of the priests who did an anointing, and what are in the hands of presbyters, and what are set up with the cotton swabs in the wheat around a standard candelabrum (Archpriest M. Archangelsky, *About the Mystery of Holy Oil*, p. 195).

²²⁾ In the Book of Needs are placed one Gospel reading the same for male and female persons, but meanwhile many priest, being guided partly by the Gospels in the old printing of the Book of Needs (see A. Dmitrievsky, Bogosl. v Rus. Tser. v 16 v. [Theology in the Russian Church in the 16th c.], pp. 414-415), these readings are strictly distinguished. Although the mystery of consecration of oil keeps its force equally irrespective of what Gospel will be read but as the structure of the Gospel in the old printed of the Book of Needs is already dropped in the present editions (beginning since 1658) also is offered new, quite concordant with the Greek, then it is necessary to stick to this office (Tserkovnyi Vestnik. [Church Messenger], 1887, 39).

²³⁾ Other priests hold the Gospel with the left hands, leaving the right hand free for making on themselves the sign of

the cross during a prayer (Archpriest M. Archangelsky, *About the Mystery of Holy Oil*, p. 270). According to the instruction of the Book of Needs of P. Mogila, other priests lay the Gospel in the right hand. - There is no need during the mystery by one priest, to have the deacon hold the Gospel; the psalm reader in any case cannot hold the Gospel, not having the right to touch it (Tserkovnyi. Vestnik. [Church Messenger], 1896, 8).

²⁴⁾ The principal priest does not assign a hand, but reads the prayer publicly, having allowed other priests that take part in the prayer also to hold the holy Gospel with hands (Posobiye k Izucheniyu Ustava Bogoslužhenia Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi [Manual for the Study of the Ustav of the Divine Services of the Orthodox Church, p. 695).

²⁵⁾ From here it is apparent that the laying of the Gospel (see note 3 above) serves as a pattern for the laying of the hand of the very Lord.

²⁶⁾ The expression of this prayer of supplication: "I pray with them" (i.e. with concelebrants), instructs that other priests receive inwardly take spiritual-prayerful part in this prayer said by the head priest "out loud" (Archpriest M. Archangelsky, *About the Mystery of Holy Oil*, in the same place, pp. 211-212). - During the Sanctification of Oil by one priest, there is no need to say in this case superfluous words about the Gospel lying on the head of the sick (as said in the prayer): "which my concelebrants hold on the head of Your servant and I pray with them" (Posobiye k Izucheniyu Usatava Bogoslužhenia Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi [Manual for the Study of the Ustav of the Divine Services of the Orthodox Church] p. 695). - Usually, during reading of this prayer, the sick constantly repeats: "Lord, have mercy" (Posobiye k Izucheniyu Usatava Bogoslužhenia Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi [Manual for the Study of the Ustav of the Divine Services of the Orthodox Church], p. 665).

²⁷⁾ The patient can do those or other bows (small, middle, great), on absence defined concerning this instruction in the "Office", depending on a condition of the forces (Archpriest M. Archangelsky, *About the Mystery of Holy Oil*, p. 214).

²⁸⁾ As the address and questioning by the priests is necessary for the patients for forgiveness, but not by the laymen present, then, in the case of doing the mystery by one priest, it is necessary to replace the plural in the corresponding places with the singular (Ts. V. 1895, 7).

²⁹⁾ According to the instruction of some, during each saying of the indicated words by the sick, the head priest, usually, turns to the sick, holding the cross held in his hand over him (refer to note 3); the singers sing the prokeimenon: "My help is from the Lord, who created the heaven and the earth" (Priest Silchenkov, p. 106). This prokeimenon is not sung everywhere. In general in this case a variety is allowed in practice. The expression of our Trebnik: "Bless, O Holy Fathers, forgive me", "having received blessings and forgiveness from them", - specify that all presbyters must bless the infirm and forgive him, by saying in reply, approximately, such words: "May God bless and forgive you" (Archpriest M. Archangelsky, *About the Mystery of Holy Oil*, p. 214). In the Book of Needs of P. Mogila the end of the anointing with oil beginning with the words of the sick to the priests is so stated "Bless, O Holy Fathers, and forgive me all sins which I did in all the days of my life, in mind, thought, sight, hearing, sense of smell, taste, touch, in word and deed, during the night and the day, willingly and unwillingly, in knowledge and in ignorance and will all my feelings, internal and external, I repent for all these and wish to receive that forgiveness from our God. The leading priest and all the others with him say: May the All-merciful God forgive all your transgressions, and may bless and have mercy on you with His bounties, and raise you up from your bed of illness and make you well, for the Existing One is blessed forever, amen." After the sick receives the blessing and forgiveness from completion of the mystery of the sanctification of oil, "the presiding priest, or one of them, may in brief do the absolution for the sick".

*S. V. Bulgakov, "Handbook for Church Servers", 2nd ed., 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900) pp. 1188-1192.
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