

Supplementary Notes for the Sanctification of Oil

The administration of the sanctification of oil should not be put off until danger of death, but must, in the understanding of the Orthodox Church, to rush to this grace of healing beforehand, when there still is no danger of death. **The obligation to accept Holy Unction in due time** is not only moral but also canonical. It is in the general requirement of the Holy Church to fulfill all of the Ustav [rules] and offices in the time allotted for them and in the circumstances defined for this. Omission of this obligation is only placed in condemnation by the Lord in such cases where the infirm in due time and sincerely wished but could not receive this mystery because of obstacles (e.g., because of the absence of presbyters, the suddenness of death, etc.). In such cases and only the faith of the infirm in the mercy of God is accepted in justification (Rom. 4:3); as "the Lord, according to the teaching of St. J. Chrysostom (see Catechetical Sermon at Matins on the 1st day of Pascha), both accepts the deeds and kisses the intention, both honors the act and offer praises" (Archpriest M. Archangelsky, *About the Mystery of Holy Oil*, pp. 80, 223-224).

Sanctification of Oil, as spiritual healing, being accepted, does not cancel **the use of natural means** given for healing our diseases by the Lord. About the sick, even after holy unction, one has to have all care, call the physicians, to give medicine and others measures for its easing and recovery (see Sir. 38:9-14), with hope, after the mercy and help of God for the easing of his infirmity and healing for the continuation of life (in the same place, pp. 263-264).

Some think that if **recovered after the sanctification of oil**, one must reject the world and become a monastic or, remaining in the world, to fulfill other vows, e.g.: not to enter into a marriage union, not to eat meat, to fast, besides Wednesday and Friday, even on Monday, and so forth; others think, that having accepted the Sanctification of Oil one cannot recover any more and inevitably soon after the Sanctification of Oil one has to die. Such contrivances undermine faith in the power of grace of the sanctification of oil, constrain and upset the soul coming to this mystery during its administration, confuse the conscience after the acceptance of holy unction, but others absolutely reject the reception of this mystery, and generally do great harm to religious and moral relationships (for more information see in the same place, pp. 261-262). Each priest, of course, should be concerned

about the eradication of all which is discordant with the teaching of the Orthodox Church and superstitious views on the mystery of the sanctification of oil existing in his flock. It is necessary for the father religious teachers to also pay special attention to the explanation of the students at schools of the true idea and meaning of the mystery of the sanctification of oil.

During the Sanctification of Oil, "he needs to teach this mystery of the needful, as anointing with holy oil with faith and firm hope accepted in Jesus Christ, who gives healing of infirmities and grants absolution of sins" (Kn. o dolzhn. Presvit. Prikhod [Book on the Needs of the Parish Presbyter], §127), and "though the body does not always receive healing, forgiveness of sins is always granted to the shaken soul" (Pravosl. Isповed. otv. na vopr. [Orthodox Confession answer to question] 119). "However because absolution of sins, even living and saving faith in Jesus Christ does not occur without true repentance: therefore before the sanctification of oil let the sick prepare himself for true repentance and, having confessed his sins, let him receive forgiveness" (Kn. o dolzhn. Presvit. Prikhod [Book on the Duties of the Parish Presbyter, 127 §).

According to the most ancient offices of the sanctification of oil, after the end of anointing the sick, he even anoints all those present, as well as the walls of the house where the mystery was done (Pravoslavnyi Sobesednik [Orthodox Interlocutor] 1887, 1 t., 82 p.; Prof. A. Dmitrievsky, *Bogosl. v Rus. Tserk v 16 v. [Theology in the Russian Church in the 16th c.]*, p. 412). Eventually **the anointing** of the house **with holy oil** (but also the anointing present during the mystery is the same) fell out of the practice and in the present "Office" it is not necessary; because this custom, explicitly, will not be coordinated with being a mystery. (Archpriest M. Archangelsky, *About the Mystery of Holy Oil*, p. 144).

Among the Catholics, before beginning the ceremonies of anointing, **sprinkling with holy water** is done cross wisely on the patient, his bed and attendees. In the Eastern Church such sprinkling with holy water in the specified case was never used even earlier (in the same place, p. 144).

Bishops do the Sanctification of Oil according to the same (stated in the Book of Needs) office as the priests, only observing the common features of the dignity. - Either the bishop with presbyters (sometimes even some bishops), or one

of the presbyters does the sanctification of **Oil over bishops**. - Bishops **receive the Sanctification of Oil**, by custom, in mantias, without all the sacred vestments, and **clergymen, monks and laymen** - in their usual attire, new, at least, clean (in the same place, pp. 52, 112).

⁹⁾ According to the Books of Needs, publ. in 1639 and 1651, this **refrain to canon troparia** of the sanctification of oil is necessary: "O merciful Lord, hear the prayer of Your servant, praying to You" (Posobiye k Izucheniyu Usatava Bogosluzhenia Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi [Manual for the Study of the Ustav of the Divine Services of the Orthodox Church], p. 693). According to the instruction the Lvov Book of Needs published in 1695, the refrain to the canon in the office of the mystery of the sanctification of oil has to be following: "O Lord, hear the prayer of Your servant, praying to You for us". According to the Book of Needs of Metr. P. Mogila, the necessary refrain is: "Glory to You, Our God, Glory to You". In our contemporary church practice refrains are used, e.g.: "O much merciful Lord, hear us sinners, praying to You", or: "O much merciful Lord, have mercy and heal Your suffering servant". According to the sense these singular refrains are equally appropriate for the canon (Archpriest M. Archangelsky, *About the Mystery of Holy Oil*, p. 178). - It does not follow to drop the canon troparia, with the exception of the above indicated case (see below, about the abbrev. office).

- Meeting some **inconvenient to understand words and expressions** in the "Office of Holy Oil" mean the following: "seal" (ode 1 of the canon, troparion 3), i.e. anointing; "of the blood of demons" (Irm. Ode 6 of the canon), i.e. from the blood sacrifices to an idol; "closed" (Irmos Ode 8 of the canon), i.e. locked; "touch of priests" (Sticheron 3 on the Praises) - there is an instruction that in ancient times priests made the anointing of the sick without the use of swabs for this purpose, but directly used the fingers of his right hand: "be cleansed by blood" (2nd prayer of the sanctification of oil) i.e. to be cleansed by the blood of animals; "blemish" (in the same place), i.e. shortcoming, defect (literally – wrinkles in Greek); before the words: "of the honorable glorious prophet" (in the abbrev. prayer), the used word "protection" is meant above; "log" (prayer before the 5th anointing) means a stump (Archpriest A. Maltsev, *Tain. Prav. Kaf. Vost. Tser. [Mysteries of the Orthodox Catholic Eastern Church]*, pp. 456, 462-463, 466 488, 492, 494, 524; Archpriest M. Archangelsky, *About the Mystery of Holy Oil*, , 145, 188 p.).

- **The saints mentioned in the troparia** in the "Office" of the sanctification of oil are: Demetrius of Thessalonica (see Oct. 26), Panteleimon (see Jul. 27) and Nicholas the wonder-worker (see May 9 and Dec. 6), and are especially glorified with the grace of working wonders. The Holy Apostle and Evangelist John the Theologian (see May 8 and Sept. 26) is called the confidant and "friend of Christ" who was entrusted with the care of the Mother of God during Her time of very grave suffering at the sight of the crucified Son (Archpriest A. Maltsev, *Tain. Prav. Kaf. Vost. Tser. [Mysteries of the Orthodox Catholic Eastern Church]*, p. 479). - About the Holy Martyr Nestor and Leah mentioned together with him see Oct. 27, p. 390.

- "Having received unction", - says the blessed Simeon of Salonika, - "listens to the teaching of the first priest that as he received forgiveness, he has to be attentive and not sin anymore; such (was) is the exhortation of the Savior to the paralytic" (see Archpriest M. Archangelsky, *About the Mystery of Holy Oil*, p. 263).

- In case of need the mystery of the sanctification of oil can be done at the same time **over several patients**, and during epidemic diseases it is permissible to use **the same oil** for several patients, without specially consecrating it each time (Metr. P. Mogila, Book of Needs).

- If serious illness forces one to assume that the sick will not endure the doing of the full office, then it is necessary **to shorten the rite**, but thus, it agrees with the instructions of the Book of Needs of Metr. P. Mogila, neither the number of readings of the Epistle and the Gospel nor the anointings of the sick is reduced, but the beginning of the office is reduced, the reading of Psalm 142 and the singing of the canon and troparia is dropped, so the office (after "Blessed is our God" and so forth) begins with the great litany, followed by the reading of the prayers at the consecration of oil. If the sick after the reading the anointing prayer "O Holy Father... for the first time" and after the first anointing if still alive, then, the omission in the order of oil is still fulfilled the same hour, and, after completion the rite is already made continuous in order, from the second epistle up to the end (Tserkovnyi Viestnik [Church Messenger] 1891, 49).

During Bright Week it is necessary to begin the **mystery of the sanctification of oil** with singing: *Christ is risen* which in this case has to replace: *Holy God*. Then, as the beginning of the sanctification of oil, in structure, is similar to the beginning of prayers in general, then it is best of all even to further adapt the continuation of this in the order: "as the molieben is sung on Holy Pascha", stated in the Pentecostarion. And here it is directly said that, doing a molieben, "the priest says: *Blessed is our God*, and we: *Amen*. Then the priest: *Christ is risen*, three times. Then the people, *Christ Is Risen*, three times as at the beginning of matins. After *Glory, both now and ever*, the priest says: *Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death. We: And upon those in the tombs bestowing life*. After this, according to the rite of the sanctification of oil, the deacon says the ektenia: *Again and again in peace let us pray to the Lord*" and so forth. Further in the same rite is placed: *Alleluia*, three times, and the troparia: *Have mercy on us O Lord, have mercy on us*. As is known that *the Alleluia* in that sense, as this is placed in the rite of the sanctification of oil after the Little Litany, i.e. as the threshold to the troparia: *Have mercy on us O Lord, have mercy on us*, - it is not used in Bright Week at all, then instead of its (*Alleluia*), following the above indicated Ustav of the molieben in the week of Pascha, it is now better to sing after the ektenia: *Before the dawn, Mary and the women*, and then: *Have mercy on us O Lord, have mercy on us* and so forth. As far as the canon change, then in this case there is no need to use the paschal canon. In particular this needs to be said about the troparia of this canon, so touching according to its contents and so closely corresponding to the essence of the mystery and its meaning for the sick. It is only necessary to read these troparia distinctly for the patient, but not to say them in a half voice as, unfortunately, this is sometimes done, during the sanctification of oil and mainly whereas for example in Malorossiya, and now after each Irmos they sing: *Save from misfortunes* and so forth. It is perhaps possible to replace the irmoses: *When Israel passed on foot through the deep*, and the irmoses of the paschal canon that will be closer to the feast and more favorable for the sick especially as these irmoses, as well as the irmoses of the paschal canon, have no special relation to the mystery of the sanctification of oil (Rukovodstvo dlia Sel'skikh Pastyrei [Manual for Village Pastors] 1886, 52).