

## FROM THE PASTOR

My dear brothers and sisters,

Before we get into the study of each Sacrament, I want to examine another aspect universal to the Sacraments – the “Sacramentals”. The word *sacramental*, could be an **adjective** that means something of or related to the Sacraments. *Sacramental*, when used as a **noun**, though (as it is here), are objects or actions which have been blessed for the purpose of drawing us closer to God. So a rosary or a crucifix could be a sacramental. I’m going to speak of the Sacramentals used in the Sacraments, specifically the Holy Oils.

Let’s back up, though. When speaking about these seven gifts of God called the **Sacraments (Baptism, Confirmation, Communion, Matrimony, Holy Orders, Confession, Anointing of the Sick)**, we speak about them being celebrated *validly* and *licitly*. Being *licit* means that it is lawful – it follows the prescriptions of our mother, the Church, in how the Sacraments are supposed to be celebrated. Being *valid*, means that they are really and truly Sacraments. So, if I were to celebrate Mass with pizza and beer, it would NOT be a *valid* Mass, since it was not bread and wine – therefore, the pizza and beer did NOT become the Body and Blood of Christ.

In order for a Sacrament to be *valid* it needs three things: proper **form**, proper **matter**, and proper **intention**. The **form** of the Sacrament are the actions and words. Part of the form of Baptism are the words: “*I Baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*” The **matter** of the Sacrament is the “stuff” that makes it. So, you need *water* to baptize, not oil, and you need a *human*, not a cat. No matter how hard you try, you cannot baptize a cat as a Christian (and I wouldn’t recommend trying, unless you’re fond of being scratched!). This is why when we have Mass, we can use a “low gluten” host, but not “gluten free”: without it being wheat bread, it doesn’t have the proper matter, and so is not consecrated. The **intention** of the Sacrament is that you want to do what the Church does. Therefore, if, for instance, a teen comes to Confirmation with the explicit intention not to receive Confirmation, not believing that Jesus is God and not wanting the Holy Spirit, no matter how valid the form and matter are, the teen has not been Confirmed. This is a bit harder to tell, since you can look at the Sacrament to see if form and matter are proper – you never know what the intention of another person is.

Okay, now that we have covered that, we’ll move on to some of the Sacramentals. I will write about specifics for each Sacrament as we get to them, but I want to focus on the Sacred Oils which are used in different Sacraments. These oils are the **Oil of the Sick**, the **Oil of Catechumens**, and the **Sacred Chrism**. They are blessed by the bishop during Holy Week, and then presented to the parish on Holy Thursday. An early teaching of the Church, called the *Jerusalem Catechesis*, says this about the oils:

**After the invocation of the Spirit it is no longer ordinary oil but the gift of Christ, and by the presence of his divinity it becomes the instrument through which we receive the Holy Spirit. While symbolically on our foreheads and senses, our bodies are anointed with this oil that we see, our souls are sanctified by the holy and life-giving Spirit.**

These oils are sacred and are to be used only as part of the Sacraments. Other oils can be used for healing prayer and other such things. These other oils might be blessed with a certain saint in mind (such as St. Padre Pio Oil) and are used with the intention of having the saint praying for those who are anointed. These can be used by anyone of Faith. The **Sacred Oils**, however, should only be used in the proper Sacramental context.

Each of the oils is made out of olive oil, and reminds us of how people in the Bible were anointed for healing, for battle, or for ministry. The **Oil of the Sick** is used specifically with the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, and follows the letter of James which tells the Church to have priests come and anoint sick people with oil for healing and for strength. The **Oil of Catechumens** is used on people (usually babies) who are to be baptized. The breast plate is anointed, and is a sign of protection and strength, to help the soon to be Christian fight the good fight of faith. The **Sacred Chrism** is the most sacred of the oils. It has a balsam perfume poured into it, and is not just blessed, but consecrated (made holy) by the bishop and his priests. The Sacred Chrism is used in Baptism, Confirmation, it anoints the priest’s hands at ordination, and the bishop’s head at his ordination. It is also used to consecrate churches and altars. It anoints as Christ was anointed (Chrism – Christ = Anointed) priest, prophet and king.

This day, may we enter more fully into the mystery of Christ through His Sacraments!