

MYSTAGOGY:

Anointing With Sacred Chrism

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA

*Loving God,
you give us a share
in your divine life
through the Gifts of
the Holy Spirit.
May we always put these
gifts to good use
as we await the coming
of your kingdom.*

Recall the Easter Vigil

After being baptized, the Sacrament of Confirmation was celebrated through the Laying on of Hands and anointing with Sacred Chrism.

Probe the Mystery

There are some who suffer from unnaturally dry skin. They take care of themselves and address that condition by liberally applying lotion to themselves. Moisturizing feels good. It makes skin supple. It reduces the itchy feeling that comes with dryness.

The Holy Spirit which comes to us in Baptism, and whose presence is strengthened in the Sacrament of Confirmation, makes us more supple as Christians. The uncertainties of life can drag us down. So can temptation and the allure of anti-Christian sentiment prevalent in culture and society.

The traditionally named seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit (wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord) buoy us up. They enable us to give witness to Christ by the example of our lives. Anointing with Sacred Chrism, the fragrant oil blessed by the bishop, imparts a spiritual seal upon us, a seal which is soothing, radiant, strengthening, and healing. By it, our lives give off the sweet aroma of Christ.

In what ways do people affirm your good example, your “fragrance” as a Christian person?

Savor the Sweetness of Salvation

It may not be used every weekend at Mass, but certainly on special occasions incense figures into the celebration. As a mark of honor, the altar may be incensed during the opening procession, or the Book of Gospels before the Gospel proclamation, or the gifts of bread and wine at their preparation. The sweet-smelling smoke rises to Heaven, signaling that—in the words of the Psalm 141—our prayers may rise like incense.

Our whole life as followers of Christ may be envisioned as a prayer rising to God. Our good words and works are an offering, a sacrifice of praise for the life we have been given by God in Christ as a free, undeserved gift.

What and who supports and sustains you in transforming your life so that it is a gift offered constantly to God day in and day out?

We prayed after all as we sang, and we sang as we prayed, “May my prayer rise straight up like incense in your presence; the lifting up of my hands an evening sacrifice.” In the prayer we observe the person, in the extension of the hands we recognize the cross. So this is the sign that we carry on our foreheads, the sign by which we have been saved.

Saint Augustine, *Sermon* 342.1: WSA 3 10:34

Inspire Others

We may be confirmed and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, but that does not mean we are perfect. Sometimes we fail to utilize the Gifts of the Spirit that we have been given. Have you received criticism lately from another? Have you truly heard what they were saying? How can you, taking into account this criticism, amend your behavior so that you become even better than you are?