

GUIDELINES FOR THE DISPOSAL OF HOLY OILS

The *Book of Blessings* states

Each year when the bishop blesses the oils and consecrates the chrism, the pastor should see that the old oils are properly disposed of by burning and that they are replaced by the newly blessed oils. (no. 1127)

A suitable oil lamp may be used to burn holy oil, especially if it is situated in a place of devotional prayer within a church or chapel. Small quantities of holy oil may be soaked up with cotton balls and burned in the fire at the Easter Vigil. Because the addition of oil may affect the fire, it is recommended that the fire-tender add the oil after the Paschal candle is lit and the procession into the church has begun.

If a large quantity of oil makes burning impractical it may be buried in sacred ground, including at a parish cemetery or on the parish grounds. Such burial should be done with reverence, but no prayer or ritual is called for. It is recommended that the oils be buried in a hole at least a foot deep. This will keep oils from returning to the surface if there is a heavy rain after burial. The oils are biodegradable; there are no environmental concerns with burying them in the ground.



Holy oils should not be poured directly into a sacrarium. Doing so may cause it to clog. Neither should they be burned with trash or other refuse.

Before returning empty holy oil bottles to the diocese rinse them with a light detergent. The resulting soapy water may be emptied into a sacrarium or directly into the ground, preferably next to the church building. The same procedure may be used to clean vessels used to store holy oils during the year.

References

Book of Blessings, no. 1127

“The Disposition of Holy Oils,” *Pastoral Liturgy* (January 2007)



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