

# **An Inclusive Thanksgiving over Chrism (Perfumed Oil)**

**A Model and Resource**

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## **Introduction**

Perfumed oil or chrism is used by some churches in their liturgies of baptism, confirmation or chrismation, ordination, and anointing of the sick. It may also be used in less official liturgies of anointing. Prayers of thanksgiving, blessing or consecration may be said over the chrism used in such liturgies, either annually or just prior to its use. Such prayers typically include references to biblical stories of anointing; traditionally such biblical references or allusions have had to do with male priests, prophets and kings. Thus most or all of the prayers now in use have omitted the several biblical references to the anointing of women or of anointing by women.

Here I offer an inclusive prayer of thanksgiving over chrism, one that does include women's stories of anointing as well as those of men. It could be used for the annual blessing of chrism or as part of individual liturgies of anointing.

This text is a model and a resource, to be adapted as seems appropriate in particular circumstances. It is offered for study and discussion.

### *Overall Structure*

This prayer of thanksgiving over chrism has four parts:

Address or Invocation  
Remembrance and Thanksgiving  
Epiclesis and Anticipation  
Doxology and Amen.

The Remembrance and Thanksgiving section includes 10 subsections, each of which follows this structure:

“God of...” [attribute related to the biblical story]

“We thank you for this chrism”

“With which [biblical story]

References to the biblical stories included are given in the separate document, “Prayers over Oil and Perfumed Oil: Biblical Resources.”

The Epiclesis and Anticipation section asks God to send the Holy Spirit upon the chrism and those who will be anointed with it, and suggests consequences that we hope will follow from the anointing.

Each section and subsection is followed by a Response said by all. The two texts given are suggestions only.

### *Options*

All 10 subsections of the Remembrance and Thanksgiving section need not be used at the same time. For use in particular circumstances any one or several may be chosen.

Within each subsection the invocation, “God of ...” may be used each time, or only the first time, or not at all.

Within each subsection, “we thank you” may be replaced by or alternated with “we bless you” or “we praise you” or the like.

The Response may be used after each section and subsection, as indicated, or less frequently if this seems more appropriate.

This thanksgiving may be prayed over chrism that has already been prepared from oil and perfume, or it may immediately follow the public mixing of oil and perfume to create the chrism.

## Thanksgiving over Chrism

Blessed are you, Holy One of Blessing.

In the beginning  
you created oil-bearing trees  
and spice-bearing plants,  
and holy wisdom taught us  
to craft this holy anointing oil (chrism).

R. Blessed be God for ever *OR* Thanks be to God, *or the like*.

God of covenant,  
we give you thanks for the chrism  
with which the Israelites were anointed  
your beloved people and your spouse. R.

God of holiness,  
we give you thanks for the chrism  
with which Aaron and his sons were anointed priests,  
serving your altar, proclaiming your word, sharing your blessing. R.

God of community,  
we give you thanks for the chrism  
with which Saul, David and Solomon were anointed kings,  
leading your people and taking responsibility for public good. R.

God of justice,  
we give you thanks for the chrism  
with which the prophet was anointed your servant,  
bringing good news to the oppressed  
and proclaiming liberty to the captives. R.

God of freedom and joy,  
we give you thanks for the chrism  
with which Judith was anointed leader of her people,  
bringing them freedom and joy. R.

God of liberation,  
we give you thanks for the chrism  
with which Esther was anointed queen  
bringing liberation, prayer and celebration. R.

God of love and fruitfulness,  
we give you thanks for the chrism  
with which Ruth was anointed,  
becoming loyal companion  
and foremother of David and Jesus. R.

God of affirmation and vindication,  
we give you thanks for the chrism  
with which Susanna was anointed  
to be faithful and upright, innocent and steadfast. R.

God of courage and love,  
we give you thanks for the chrism  
with which the woman (Mary of Bethany) anointed Jesus,  
to express her affection and friendship  
and prepare his body for burial. R.

God of life,  
we give you thanks for the chrism  
which the women took to the tomb  
to anoint the body of Jesus,  
whom they found to be alive  
and who commissioned them to proclaim this good news. R.

Now bless this oil that you have created  
and fill it with the power of the Holy Spirit.  
Make this mixture of oil and perfume  
a sign and source of your blessing  
for those who are to be born again  
in the waters of baptism  
and for those to be ordained in your service.  
Transform them into the likeness  
of Christ your Beloved. R.

We pray in praise of your graciousness,  
in union with Jesus Christ who is Risen,  
and through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.  
R. Amen.