

## The Anointing of the Altar and Walls of the Church

In Old Testament times oil was used to anoint those who in Jewish society were set apart for special duties, as kings, priests and prophets. The Church uses the Oil of Chrism in its most solemn ceremonies. The altar occupies the holiest place in the church; together with this church building it will today be set apart from the secular world for the use of the sacred liturgy by being blessed and anointed.

## The Incensation of Altar and Walls

In the Book of Revelation St John writes of an angel standing before the altar with a gold censor and that "the smoke of the incense of the prayers of the saints ascended up before God from the hand of the angel". Incense is a symbol of prayer rising before God, its beauty and fragrance is used as it was in the temple worship to reverence God and acknowledge his presence with us. The newly consecrated altar and walls of the church are incensed as a mark of reverence for this building and altar now sanctified for the worship of God. Finally Bishop, priests and people are incensed to remind us that we too have been consecrated in baptism and form the "priestly, kingly and holy people of God"

## The Preparation of the Altar for the Eucharist

The altar is prepared by members of the parish for the celebration of the Eucharist. This is a simple act as we would prepare a table for an important family meal but it nevertheless points to the profound reality that it is primarily for the celebration of the Eucharist for the family of the local church in this parish that this church has been built.

## The Lighting of the Altar and the Church

The lighting of the candles on the altar and the walls of the church bring to mind that "God is light and in Him there is no darkness". As Christians we are called to bring that light into the world of today. Candles are a symbol of selfless generosity, consumed in bringing light and warmth to those around them. Candles are still used to mark festive occasions and so the lighting of the candles and lights of the church concludes the joyful preparations for the celebration of the Liturgy of the Eucharist in the newly dedicated church.

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