

Holy Unction: the Sacrament of Healing

Holy Unction (also known in Greek as “*efhelaion*,” literally “prayer oil”) is a sacramental act whereby the Church seeks wholeness and well-being for its members, especially the sick and the suffering. The service of Holy Unction consists of a modified Orthros, a series of petitions and hymns, and seven Epistle and Gospel readings, accompanied by seven priestly prayers for the blessing and sanctification of oil. Afterwards, those who are present are anointed with this healing oil. The Church does not ascribe “magical” healing properties to the oil, but rather sees in this action a concrete expression of love and concern for the wholeness and well-being of the person anointed.

The service of Holy Unction is always celebrated on Wednesday of Holy Week prior to Easter. It may also be celebrated on Clean Monday at the beginning of Lent. In addition, if a member of the Church has a special need, he or she may ask one of the priests to perform a special service of Holy Unction, either in the Church or in the home.