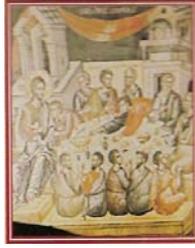


## *Great Thursday*



In the divine services for this day the events which preceded the procession of the Savior to his voluntary passion are recalled: the fulfillment of Jesus Christ of the final Passover evening meal with the washing of feet and the establishment of the mystery of the Eucharist and the betrayal of Judas. In the Epistle reading both the establishment of the mystery and its purpose are described and the worthy paradigm of preparation for it and its reception <sup>1</sup>). The Gospel reading tells about the circumstances, which preceded, accompanied and followed the Mystical Supper, and are selected from the passages of the holy Evangelists Matthew, Luke and John. To the various amazing Gospel events remembered on this day there also corresponds an abundant variety of touching feelings and thoughts represented in the church hymns for this day. Beholding the Savior already in the final minutes before His suffering, the Holy Church in its hymns deeply grieves and co-suffers the grief of His spirit with Him in terms so clear to the human heart. But, knowing, who this Sufferer is and for what and for whom He goes to His death, the Holy Church gives no less place and feeling of reverent love to the One going to His voluntary passion and His beneficial glorification. With special power wishing to express indignation for the snares of the Jews and to the perfidy of Judas, on the one hand, and reverent homage for the longsuffering of the Savior, on the other hand, the Holy Church exclaims: "The assembly of the Jews gathers together to deliver the Maker and the Creator of all to Pilate. What lawlessness! What faithlessness! The judge of the living and the dead, they prepare for judgment. The Healer of suffering, they prepare for suffering. O long-suffering Lord! How great is Thy mercy! Glory to thee!" Glorifying the eternal love of the Savior, who took up all the weight of human sins, and His inexpressible humility, the washing of the feet of His servants, the Holy Church reverences before the cup of eternal life offered by the Founder, glorifies the bloody prayer of the Savior in Gethsemane, also giving us a holy and profound lesson: to seek consolation in prayer and confirmation in bearing the cross in our life amidst tribulations and at the time of the approach of death.

### *Troparion, tone 8*

**When the glorious disciples were enlightened  
At the washing of their feet before the supper,  
Then the impious Judas, ailing with avarice, was darkened,  
And he betrays Thee, the Righteous Judge, to the lawless judges.  
Behold, O lover of money, this man who because of money hanged himself.  
Flee from the greedy soul which dared such things against the Teacher.  
O Lord, Who art good towards all men, glory to Thee.**

*Kontakion, tone 2.*

**The betrayer receives the bread in his hands  
But secretly stretches them out to receive  
The price of Him Who fashioned man with His own hands.  
For Judas, slave and liar, remains depraved.**

*Troparion, tone 6 (instead of the Cherubic Hymn)*

**Of Thy mystical supper, O Son of God,  
Accept me today as a communicant.  
For I will not speak of Thy mystery to Thine enemies,  
Neither like Judas will I give Thee a kiss,  
But like the thief will I confess Thee.  
Remember me, O Lord, in Thy Kingdom.**

Beginning with Great Thursday<sup>2)</sup> until Paschal Saturday the prayer **before the Canon** "O God, save Thy people" is not read.

On Great Thursday at the **1st Hour** the reading of the Paramoia from the book of the Prophet Jeremiah in which he described beforehand the enmity of the Judaic elders against Christ, His meekness and gentleness, with which He gives Himself into their hands is appointed.

In commemoration of the institution of the mystery of the Eucharist the **Liturgy of St. Basil the Great** preceded by **Vespers** (even if Annunciation falls on this day)<sup>3)</sup> is served. In the Lenten Triodion (for example, pub. in Moscow in 1864, 1879) it says that in Vespers during the singing of "Lord, I call", the priest goes out and censes, having changed his priestly vestments, i.e. changes into black **vestments**. **In the liturgy**, the same hymn: "Of Thy Mystical Supper" is sung in place of the Cherubic Hymn, the Communion Hymn, and the hymn "Let our mouths be filled with Thy praise". During the Great Entrance this hymn is not ordinarily split (as it does not divide conveniently), and it is entirely repeated after the entrance (Tserkovnyi Vestnik. [Church Messenger] 1892, 38).

**Litias for the departed** in the entryway are not done until Thomas Sunday.

**Matins Gospel:** Lk. 22:1-39; sel. 108. **Paramoia** 1) Jer. 11:18-23, 12:1-14. 2) Ex. 19:10-19. 3) Job. 38:1-23, 42:1-5. 4) Is. 50: 4-11. **Epistle:** 1 Cor. 11:23-32; sel. 149. **Gospel:** Mt. 26:1-20; Jn. 13:3 - 17; Mt. 26:21-39; Lk. 22:43-45; Mt. 26:40-75; 27:1-2.

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<sup>1)</sup> On this day the Holy Church in following His footsteps calls the faithful to partake of the body and blood of the Savior - at the hour of the establishment of

this most holy mystery and as if from the very hands of its Divine Founder. Even the solemn Cherubic Hymn is dropped in this liturgy and is replaced by a touching hymn, through the accusation of Judas and by imitation of the confession of the wise thief: "Of Thy Mystical Supper". As well the usual laudatory Hymn to the Theotokos is replaced by the Irmos of the Canon in which the faithful are invited to the supper of Christ, in perception of it as the immortal meal offered by Christ.

2) Concerning the singing of the "Lord, have mercy" in the "lenten or festal" mode from Great Thursday on, the "Church Messenger" (1892, 38) stated the following reasoning: Although on Great Wednesday both prostrations and together with them repentance terminates, it is hardly possible to comfortably pass over in the course of the church services to festive, celebratory singing before the liturgy of Great Saturday in which, i.e. actually, at Vespers, relating to the next day, and where there are solemn, festive hymns (4 sticheras "on Lord, I call", of the 1st tone of the Octoechos).

3). In former times on Great Thursday, during the time of the Hours, before Vespers, the Office of the Washing of the Holy Altar Table took place. The most ancient witness for this custom goes back to the 7th century and belongs to the western writer, Isidore of Seville. Witnesses for the existence of the same custom in the East go back to the 10th - 12th centuries, but they refer back to a more ancient period.

In the Russian Church in the 12th century there already was a Slavonic translation of the Office of the Washing of the Holy Altar Table. In the 14th century this office is already frequently found in our hand-written Book of Needs. According to the ancient printed Book of Needs of the 17th century, the full Office of the Washing of the Holy Altar Table consisted mainly of two prayers, one of which was read before the unvesting of the Holy Altar Table during the time of its initial censing, and the other after the washing and the revestment. The Book of Needs presents two rules covering the actions occurring between these two prayers and then their ending. After the first of them, except for the appointed two prayers, the celebrant says nothing. After the second, observed "nowhere in the great cathedral temples" except for saying the two prayers, during the time of unvesting the holy altar table the 50th, 25th and 83rd psalms were appointed to be sung, but during the time of pouring the basin with wine and oil on the altar the hierarch should say: "the Holy Altar Table in the church, *name*, is washed with the oil of gladness in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit". The reading of the second prayer is followed by the Litany: "Have mercy on us, O God", "More honorable" and the dismissal.

So the office of the washing of the table is in the anciently printed Book of Needs of the year 1625 and the year 1639 and others. In the same Book of Needs, besides this, the instruction of how to perform this office "if there is no cathedral church there" was printed. "Canons, it is said in this instruction, do not require the

holy altar table be re-vested, unless the priest removes the covering, and powder falls from the altar table, and wetting his lips with warm water he also wipes the holy table cross wisely, and then says the first prayer... And the three psalms... and gathers the holy oil and spreads it on the corners of the holy table cross wisely, and the entire sanctuary, and the entire church, and puts a covering over the holy table and sprinkles it with water and says the second prayer... and he censes the holy altar table, and the Litanies..., Also "More honorable than the Cherubim" and the dismissal. This will be done even if there is only a priest".

The office of washing the table complies with this instruction and according to this in the detailed view in the 17th century it was possible for every parish priest to do this office in each parish church, only without unvesting the holy altar table.

This office was especially solemnly performed in Moscow where the patriarch presided over the services. At the beginning of the 18th century the Office of Washing the Table was also done. But it is not printed any more in the contemporary Book of Needs. Undoubtedly, at first this rite had the meaning of a simple cleaning, usual before great feasts and in private homes. The cleaning of churches and the divine service accessories before Pascha, the greatest Christian feast, administered by ancient Christians at the beginning of the year, is rather natural and was the custom from of old. The Ustav (Typikon) required it for monasteries. Walls, floors and those accessories of the temple which the lowest church servers could touch were cleaned without special solemnity, but the holy altar table is the most sacred accessory of the temple consecrated by the bishop and is why the unvesting and its new vestments should naturally be done by the bishop and with special solemnity.

But also the symbolical meaning of the Rite of Washing the Holy Altar Table could hardly be called in question. One of the most ancient features of this worship service is that the liturgy on this day should be done after Vespers, in memory of the establishment of the Mystery of the Eucharist accomplished by Jesus Christ on His last eve of the Passover. Therefore this liturgy on this day, except for its general meaning, still has individual significance, serving as a symbolical reminder of a determined historical fact.

The Washing of the Holy Altar Table concerns, as it seems, this feature, the fulfillment of the symbolical maintenance of the rules for the preparation for Vespers accomplished by Jesus Christ, in the actions and more clearly in the manifestations of the special symbolical meaning of the Liturgy accomplished on this day. (For details see *Pravoslavnyi Sobesednik (Orthodox Companion)* 1887, Vol. 1, pp. 419-433).

### *Great Thursday, the Washing of the Feet*

On Great Thursday, in cathedral churches after the Prayer before the Ambo, the Bishop performs the **washing of the feet** of 12 chosen church servers <sup>1)</sup>. The Bishop, without a crosier and unsupported by any one, exits through the Royal Doors to the place of vesting. Before him a Deacon carries the Gospel and another two Deacons carry a pitcher and wash basin. The Deacon places the Gospel on the Analogion. During this time the Priests slowly recite the verses of Psalm 50. Approaching the place of vesting, the Bishop sits down on the chair prepared for him, but not on the cathedra which represents the royal seat. After having received the blessing from the Hierarch, the Protodeacon two by two gradually leads the archimandrites or priests, representing the disciples of the Lord on that evening, out of the Sanctuary. At this time the singers sing the 5th Ode of the Canon of Great Thursday and the Idiomela (Samoglasen) stikhera in which the washing of the feet accomplished by the Lord is represented. The Archimandrites or Priests, approaching the place of vesting, bow to the Bishop and sit down. When the number of 12 disciples is fulfilled, the Deacon intones the Litany: "In peace let us pray to the Lord" in which, by the way, he asks: "That this washing will be blessed and sanctified by the power, action and descent of"; "That it will be for the washing of the filth of our iniquities". During this Litany the Bishop and Priests sit, just as the disciples of the Lord also reclined for supper. Following the hierarchical exclamation for the Litany, "For Thou art our cleansing" the Bishop rises alone (but the priests remain sitting) and reads aloud the prayer: "O All Good God", in which he prays that the Lord would find us worthy to be washed of carnal filth and spiritual impurities by the touching of this water, strengthen us from the crafty serpent watching for our heel and that being cleansed, we shall pleasingly serve God. After this the Bishop, having given the "Peace be to all" blessing, silently reads the prayer: "O Lord our God, Who has shown us the measure of humility", in which he prays that the Lord would grant us grace in serving each other, uplift us with divine humility and preserve us undefiled. After the prayer the Bishop sits down in the chair. The Protodeacon, having received the blessing from the Bishop, says: "And that He may grant us the hearing of the Holy Gospel", and, after the usual preparation for hearing Gospels, reads the Gospel. During the reading of the Gospel the Bishop and Priests sit. When the Deacon exclaims three times: "He (Jesus) rose from the supper", the Bishop stands up. And when the deacon reads: "and laid aside his garments", the Bishop himself removes his miter and hands it to the deacon, then by himself without any help from others, he removes his

Panagia, Cross, Omophorion, Saccos (Dalmatic) and Palitsa and puts them on the chair. The Bishop does not remove his priestly vestments: Belt {zone}, Cuffs, Epitrachelion {stole} and Sticharion {Podriznik}. And taking the Miter from the Deacon, he puts it on himself. The Archimandrites and Priests, during the Washing of Feet, also sit wearing their Miters or Kamilavkas. Then the Bishop, taking the muslin veil, or linen garment, attaches one end of the veil in front, and the other end drops to his feet. During all this time the Protodeacon repeats the words: "and laid aside his garments". Then the Protodeacon reads: "And taking a towel, He girded himself (Jn 13:4)", and the Bishop girds himself with a towel, throwing it from the left hand across his back to the right shoulder, and the end of the towel lays on his left hand. While the Deacon reads the words: "Then pouring water into a basin", the Bishop pours water from a pitcher into the basin. The Deacon repeats these words three times, and the Bishop pours in water three times cross-wisely, silently saying: "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit".

When the Deacon reads: "And began to wash the feet of the disciples and wipe them with the towel by which He was girded", then the Bishop performs this action, beginning from his place on the left side reaching those sitting by the Royal Doors; then he goes down the right side from those sitting by the Royal Doors until he comes to the one representing Simon Peter<sup>2</sup>). Washing each person's feet three times, the Bishop pours water over them three times into the basin. During this time the Deacon repeats the words: "Then pouring water into a basin". Two Deacons carry the basin before the Bishop. The Bishop kneeling on one knee washes the feet. He pours water over each foot three times and then wipes them with the towel. The one whose foot the Bishop washes kisses the Bishop on the Miter and his hand. The Bishop kisses his hand.

When the deacon says: "Then he came to Simon Peter, and Peter said to Him", the first Archimandrite stands up and says: "Lord, do you wash my feet?" The Bishop says: "What I do, you do not now know, but you will understand hereafter". The Archimandrite says: "You shall never wash my feet". The Bishop answers: "If I do not wash you, you will have no part with Me". The Archimandrite says: "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head". Pointing to his hands and head, the Archimandrite sits down. The Bishop says: "He that is washed does not need to wash, except his feet: for he is clean all over, and you are clean, but not all", and he washes the feet of the Archimandrite.

Then the Bishop ascends to his place and removes the towel and linen garment. The Deacon reads the Gospel up to the words: "For He knew who

would betray Him". The Singers after the reading of the Gospels sing: "Glory to Thee, O Lord, glory to Thee". Then the Deacon says again: "Wisdom. Let us attend. Let us hear the holy Gospel", and, after the usual preparation for hearing the Gospel, he begins to read the Gospel from John: "At that time, when Jesus had washed the feet of the disciples, and had taken His garments". During this time the Bishop vests himself.

After vesting, when the Deacon says: "He sat down again", the Bishop sits down, but all of the priests rise, and the Bishop, sitting, finishes the reading of the Gospel which points to the meaning of the washing of the feet: "For I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you". After this the Bishop rises and in the hearing of all says this prayer: "O Lord our God, Who according to Thy many mercies, didst exhaust Thyself", in which he prays that the Lord washed all filth and uncleanness from our souls, that we, "having washed the dust of transgressions clinging to us, having wiped each other with the towel of love, may be able to please God all the days of our life and find grace before Him. Then the Bishop enters the Sanctuary and the ends the liturgy as usual. (See details in the Great Book of Needs, chapter 77.)

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1) The pious custom of washing the feet existed among the Jews from time immemorial, and it always served as a sign of special reverent respect to whom it was administered. Thus, for example, Abraham, having met three mysterious travelers under the oaks (terebinths) of Mamre, invited them to his tent: "let water be brought, that they may wash your feet" (Gen. 18:4). In the same way Laban honored the envoys of Abraham, and Joseph his brothers in Egypt. It is also known, for example, that it is written in the Gospel about the woman sinner who "with her tears wet the feet of Jesus Christ and with the hair of her head she wiped them" (Lk. 7:44). The Savior, "with humility tolerably admonishing us", sanctified this custom, and the Holy Church from of old has legalized the Rite of the Washing of the Feet, as raising before our eyes the great condescension of the Savior and in general preaching the majestic height of Christian humility.

2) According to the written Novgorod Hierarchical Service Book (Sluzhebnyk) of the 17th century, the last place from the Royal Doors was occupied by the one representing Judas Iscariot, but the first sitting at the left of the Bishop represented the Apostle Peter. The washing of the feet began with the presentation of Judas.

According to the 17th century Ustav (Typikon) of the Moscow Dormition Cathedral, "the place of Judas was placed closer to the Royal Doors directly in the line of sight of the Patriarch". Usually somebody from among the chapel cathedral priests sat "in the place of Judas", and who always received a payment of 16 altins (three-kopeck coins) in money for this. But in 1656 the patriarchal Subdeacon Peter Fedorov sat in "the place of Judas" and received the same payment. Sometimes (for example, in 1682, during the reign of Patriarch Joachim) none was appointed to the place of Judas so that it remained unoccupied.

*S. V. Bulgakov, **Handbook for Church Servers**, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900) pp. 539-540  
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### *Great Thursday: Consecration of Chrism*

Chrism is consecrated in Kiev and Moscow on Great Thursday. The sanctification of myrrh is done according to the following paradigm.

On the first three days, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday the chrism is prepared. The composition of chrism is prepared according to a special ecclesiastical rite from various substances as a sign of the multifarious gifts of the Holy Spirit. Now chrism is composed of the following substances: olive oil, white grape wine, styrax (rosamallos), and benzoin (benjamin), simple white and black, mastic, sandarac, rose petal, basilica (grass) frankincenses, and roots: white iris, ginger, calamus, galangal, cardamom, thick muscatel oil, essence of balsam, Venetian terebinth, and of perfumed oils: bergamot, citric, lavender, clove, mother of thyme, rosemary, of the lignum vitae tree, rose, cinnamon, marjoram, orange and muscatel liquid. The entire mixture of the chrism is sprinkled over with water blessed by the bishop. The prepared mixture is placed in the vessels for the preparation of the chrism under which the bishop will light the fire, and then stirred by the church servers, priests and deacons. During all the time of the preparation of the chrism, the priests continuously read the Holy Gospels, but the vested deacons will thoroughly stir the mixture put in the boilers. The chrism prepared thus on Great Wednesday is then poured into twelve vessels, according to the number of the twelve apostles. Only one of the apostles had the right to impose the grace of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands on the baptized. This practice was soon replaced with Chrismation. On Great Thursday before the reading of the Hours, church servers bring these vessels into the temple, place them on the Table of Oblation, and during the Great Entrance carry them along with the priests bearing the Holy Gifts before the serving bishop. After the Great Entrance, these vessels are placed on the holy table with the Holy Gifts, and after the consecration of the Holy Gifts, the Hierarch consecrates the chrism with the cross wise blessing of each vessel and with the particular prayer in which he asks the Lord for the infusion of the Holy Spirit into the chrism for the sanctification of souls and bodies anointed with it. In the following prayer the hierarch offers thanksgiving to God for the sanctification of the chrism. After the liturgy the chrism consecrated in this manner is brought to a special depository with the singing of Psalm 44, praising the glory of Solomon after his anointing to the kingdom <sup>1)</sup>. According to need and by the order of diocesan authorities, the consecrated chrism is transferred to the parish priests for the sealing of the newly baptized.

### *Great Thursday: Anointing of the Healthy*

Between Matins and Liturgy in the Moscow Dormition Cathedral, and also in the Holy Trinity St. Sergius Laura and some other cathedrals <sup>2)</sup> and monasteries (see Monast. page 67) the anointing of the healthy takes place. A table is placed in the middle of the church. A silver bowl with oil, a similar bowl with wine and a tray on which are up to seven small crystal cups and brushes {swabs} are placed on

the table. The Analogion with a Gospel is placed before the table. The Bishop, in minor vestments, exits the sanctuary through the Royal Doors and stands before the prepared table and Analogion. The actual consecration of oil is done according to the Book of Needs, but with certain changes and omissions. During the Canon the Bishop distributes candles and censes the entire church. The prayer "O Holy Father, Physician of souls and bodies" is read only once after the seventh Gospel. After the reading of this prayer, the Bishop, having mixed the oil and wine with a spoon, pours the mixture into the crystal cups and anoints the archpriest and the brethren, and, for speed in anointing the others with oil, distributes the glasses to the concelebrants. The archpriest and some other priests stand at an elevated place and anoint all the people. During the anointing the prayer "O Holy Father" is not read and is replaced with "The blessing of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ for the healing of the soul and body of the servant of God, NN, always now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen". After the anointing, the Bishop removes his miter and reads the prayer: "O Holy King", while the concelebrating priests hold the open Gospel over the head of the Bishop and quietly repeat this same Prayer. After this the Dismissal takes place according to the Book of Needs. While the Mystery of Unction, according to the canons of the Church, should not be celebrated over the healthy, the Greeks from ancient times had the custom of celebrating Unction on Great Thursday over the healthy <sup>3</sup>). St. Demetrius of Rostov said that this unction for the healthy is done by us "according to custom held firmly in the memory of the church, but not according to written tradition", then continues: "why is the Mystery given to the healthy on Great Thursday? Inasmuch that Christ established the New Covenant of His body and blood at the supper on Great Thursday so it is not improper to commune with the Mystery, even for the healthy person, who does not know the day and hour" (Refer to Tserkovnyi Vestnik, 1896, 29).

### *Great Thursday: Fasting Rules*

"On Great Thursday", it says in the Ustav (Typikon), "we eat foods cooked in oil and drink wine, and otherwise dry food because the Alleluia is sung. The Typikon of the Studite Monastery rules to eat cooking one food with oil, juice, scalded beans and wine on Great and Holy Thursday. The Typikon of the Holy Mountain rules to eat cooking two things with oil and three cups of wine on Great and Holy Thursday. And the rector decides all this, overseeing how his brotherhood in Christ will voluntarily benefit". The Nomocanon in the Great Book of Needs (canon 225) says: "but neither is oil eaten on Great Thursday according to Canon 50 of the Council of Laodicea (364 A.D.)".

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<sup>1</sup>) Adapting the sanctification of Chrism to Great Thursday, both eastern and western liturgicists explain the symbolical bases, namely that the church wanted to honor the commemoration on this day of the anointing of the head of Jesus by Mary, the sister of Lazarus (Jn. 12:1-8). But it is quite probable that there was also another more real basis flowing from necessity. At the time when the conditions of

baptism of the catechumens were announced and the reunion of the repenting were strictly observed and when, hence, the heads of the Church had to deal with larger masses wishing to join, naturally, the special need for consecrated Chrism for the anointing of the newly baptized and those entering the church from heresies, was felt about this time. Holy Chrism was originally consecrated at any time according to need.

<sup>2)</sup> In the Odessa Cathedral it is done on Great Friday (See the Instr. Nicanor, Archb. Cherson. vol. 2, pp. 231, 234).

<sup>3)</sup> According to some, the custom of general Unction did not appear among us earlier than the 16th century. There is an assumption that in the 17th century general Unction was done in all cathedrals and monasteries. How long this practice remained in force is not known. In the 20's of the 18th century general Unction was still done even in provincial cathedrals. St. Demetrius of Rostov speaks about general Unction as a custom among us during his time. At the end of the 18th century, the performance of general Unction most likely was an individual feature of the celebration of services only in the Moscow Dormition Cathedral and in some monasteries. Undoubtedly, the custom of Unction has passed to us from Greece where it is apparently widely practiced even now. In relation to the 17th century there is the direct witness that the practice of doing general Unction in Greece was widely spread. In some places Unction was done on Great Saturday and in other places on Great Thursday.

The general anointing with consecrated oil on Great Thursday or on Great Saturday needs to be considered separately from the anointing in the Mystery of Unction. During this general blessing of oil the healthy are anointed (but the Mystery of Unction, according to the canons of the Church, are only done for the ill), in the presence of already in a way completing the sacred action outside of it after the Prayer of Dismissal, without saying the prayer of the sacramental anointing: "O Holy Father..." during the anointing, except those persons who were present during the serving of the sacred action. And in the same way they anoint the walls of monastic cells with the oil. Not having the meaning of the Mystery (Sacrament), general Unction, according to some, is like the "use of surpluses", in that the believers are undoubtedly blessed, but not in the same way as in the Mystery of Unction. According to its beginning the general blessing of oil was purely a symbolical rite.

It is known that in antiquity, the same as now, olive oil was consecrated for various needs and outside of the Mystery, during which the method of sanctification was for the most part the same as that used in Mystery of Unction, i.e. the prayer of the priest. Equally with water, in antiquity consecrated oil was used for various sorts of blessings of individuals and objects not only in public divine services but also in private ways of life. Considering the extensive use of sanctified oil, it is quite possible to make the assumption about its use even for the sanctification of individuals who approached for the ascetic effort of repentance. It

is quite probable that these individuals, having made their effort and having reunited themselves with the Church or finally having prepared for this reunion, according to Simeon of Salonika, "offered to God" in church (what hitherto they had no right to do) olive oil as a symbol of the mercy of God, recalling the example of the harlot who anointed the feet of Jesus and received remission of sins. And this oil after its sanctification by the prayer of the priests, was used for anointing of the offerers in remembrance of this same fact.

The rite of consecration and anointing, accomplished under specified conditions, could not be other than a rite fulfilling the solemn conditions of reconciliation by publicly repenting and has a simple historico-symbolical meaning, a rite exclusively pertaining to the conditions of the Mystery of Repentance. Having accepted such an assumption, it already will be rather easy to explain why the general blessing of oil is done on Great Thursday and Saturday. In the East during the day of solemn reconciliation with the Church, individuals offering public repentance as well as catechumens being baptized in preparation for the day of Pascha were more faithfully done on the eve of Pascha, Great Saturday. But in the West the more common custom was to make reconciliation by repenting on Great Thursday and is probably also practiced in some Eastern Churches.

The adapted common blessing of oil on the specified days are, obviously, a remembrance of these ancient terms of reconciliation of those repenting with the Church, but the blessing of oil evidently with the flow of time became the rite of anointing those repenting with the oil of repentance, symbolically recalling the oil of the harlot, who anointed the feet of Jesus and received forgiveness of sins. Being in the beginning purely a symbolical rite, the general blessing of oil eventually, subsequently blocking out its original idea, changed into what is viewed as the Mystery of Unction. Such change will be understood if one were to take into account the existence in the ancient Eastern Church the custom of specially consecrating oil for the sick before Pascha just as, according to a quite probable assumption, there was a custom of consecrating oil for the anointing of catechumens especially outside the order of baptism.

In the Western Church even at the present time on Great Thursday the sanctification of oil for the catechumens (*oleum catechumenorum*) and oil for the ill receiving the Mystery of Unction (*oleum infirmorum*) is done in connection with the sanctification of chrism. This custom in the Western Church is rather ancient. Already from the 8th century the fully formed offices of the consecration of chrism and oil on Great Thursday were kept there.

True, in the East in antiquity there are almost no instructions for a separate and assigned certain time for the sanctification of oil for the ill. But nevertheless some consider the possibility to recognize the existence of this custom, explaining the absence of the necessary instructions partly because the sanctification of oil of this kind (no less than the special sanctification of oil for the catechumens) rather early fell out of use, partly because in antiquity, as partly now, both these oils differed between themselves not in the way of sanctification, but only in the

direction of use, so that documents relating to the sanctification of the one can be carried over to the sanctification of the other. Having allowed the existence in antiquity the custom to bless oil especially for the sick on Great Thursday, as if in reserve, but together with this having allowed the absence of the outstanding features in the office of the sanctification of this oil, it is rather easy to understand that this office could conveniently include even the sanctification of oil designated for the anointing of those repenting. And even more the oil of repentance could be replaced with the oil consecrated for the sick or for the Mystery of Unction, not only to those restored from the bed of illness, but also for the granting remission of sins. At first, only those repenting in the true sense were anointed with this oil, and later, as all Christians considered themselves obligated to repent during the holy days of Passion Week they began to anoint everyone and the general blessing of oil was manifested. (See details in *Pravoslavnyi Sobesednik (Orthodox Companion)* 1887, 2 vol., 75-98 pages).

*S. V. Bulgakov, **Handbook for Church Servers**, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900) pp. 540-543  
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