

4. OIL: JOY AND HEALING

Light a candle and let part of it drip onto a piece of paper. Feel it before it cools and hardens again into wax. Does it feel oily? If it does, it is because oil is part of the material used to make candles. When oil burns, it gives light. Put some oil into a small jar. Put a wick through a piece of cork and light it. You'll have a lamp that can burn for several hours. In Bible times there was no electricity, so people used oil for their source of light.

Light is very important to us because it helps us to see things clearly and to do many things that would be impossible in darkness. **But especially** we use lots of lights in our **homes and churches when we want to celebrate**. So light and the oil that is used to produce light have become a **sign of happiness and joy**.

Now take a tube of ointment, like vaseline or a first-aid cream. Squeeze out a small amount and rub it between your fingers; that feels oily too, doesn't it? Even today oil is part of the material we use to heal small cuts and bruises. But oil has always been used as a method and **sign of healing**. Do you remember the story of the Good Samaritan who poured oil on the man's wounds to heal them? (Luke 10:30-34)

Oil comes from many sources, but one source of oil is olives. You've heard of olive oil. In the Bible, the olive branch was used by God as a sign of peace, as when He sent the dove to Noah with an olive branch to show that the flood and the destruction of the earth had stopped. So, oil is also a **sign of peace**.

When you were baptized, the priest anointed you with oil (in many churches, olive oil is used) before he put you into the



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water. This oil is called the **oil of gladness** and it is the sign of all the things we have talked about: **joy, healing, and peace**.

First, the priest put oil on your head, saying:

*"The servant of God _____
(name)
is anointed with the oil of gladness; in the
name of the Father, and of the Son, and of
the Holy Spirit. Amen."*

He anointed your chest and shoulders, saying:

"Unto the healing of soul and body"

And your ears:

"Unto the hearing of faith"

And your hands:

*"Thy hands have made me and fashioned
me"*

And your feet:

*"That he may walk in the way of Thy
commandments."*

In this way, every part of you was anointed that your life with God would be a life of peace, health, and gladness. Sometimes the priest puts oil over the whole body of the child being baptized. The oil serves not only as a sign of joy but helps to protect the baby from the cold water when he is baptized — in this case, the water runs right off the baby and the oil really acts to keep the baby healthy.

The priest also blessed the water in the font with the oil, making the sign of the cross in the water, saying:

"Blessed is God Who illumines and sanctifies (gives the light of understanding, and makes holy) every man that comes into the world."

And the people sang:

"Alleluia" ("Praise God"—a song of joy).

