

HOLY UNCTION

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THE PLUMB LINE

THE SEASONS OF LENT

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BELIEVERS EASTERN CHURCH

adheres to orthodox faith

HOLY UNCTION

Faith and Tradition Series

HOLY UNCTION
Faith and Tradition Series
(English)

August 15, 2015

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Preface

*In the name of the Father, the Son
and the Holy Spirit ✠*

Our faith and tradition are the two major factors that define our identity in Christian living. Faith stands for what we believe as a church and tradition denotes how we live according to our faith.

As a church, the faith of Believers Eastern Church is deeply rooted in the Holy Bible, which is the foundation of our life and spirituality. Our tradition is the practices of what the apostles, the composers of the New Testament showed and later was perfected by the vision of the early church fathers.

My hope is that the 'Faith and Tradition' series will bring renewal and life to our Christian life and our church, to know

Jesus, who gave His life and loved us, more intimately.

✠The blessings of the Triune God be with you all forever.

✠Dr. K. P. Yohannan
Metropolitan

Synod Secretariat
October 15, 2015

Introduction

There are times in our life when we need God's help desperately. When we face death due to serious illness or otherwise, we look to God helplessly. Anybody, whether a Christian or non-Christian, wants peace and an assurance of healing under such circumstances. We know well that only God can give a helping hand in troubled times of our life.

The Holy Unction is one of the sacraments that is meant to meet our needs at these crucial times. 'Unction' is a term used for anointing someone with oil before offering the prayers for them. Holy Unction is a special anointing when someone needs it most. It emphasizes the healing of an individual's body, soul and spirit by God, as an answer to our prayers.

A sick person can request for the Holy Unction, or it can be suggested by their family or the clergy. It is given when a person becomes

Holy Unction

seriously ill and his condition has worsened. Performing Extreme Unction is done for a person who is close to death or prior to a serious surgery.

One of my favorite authors of all times is C. S. Lewis. The introduction of his book, “The Weight of Glory” revised and expanded edition by Walter Hooper, says the following about C. S. Lewis receiving the Holy Unction when he was ill and how C. S. Lewis believed in the significance of it.

“... but as C. S. Lewis request (Rev. Dr. Austin Farrer) remained in Oxford ... so that Austin Farrer could hear C. S. Lewis’ confession and give him the Blessed Sacrament. Lewis wanted me to receive the Sacrament with him, but as I was not ill, this was not allowed. “In that case”, Lewis said, “you must be present to do the kneeling for me.”

Lewis moved back to his home and later his health got worse. (This must have been the time when Extreme Unction was administered for C. S. Lewis). Hooper writes, “to everyone’s surprise, he sank into a coma, lasting about twenty four hours, for which the doctors did not believe he would recover. Rather than tell Lewis how close he had come to dying, the doctors appeared to leave this to me. When

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I judged the time was right, I told him about the coma and a few days when his mind was disordered. Thereafter, Lewis continued to believe that the Extreme Unction administered during the coma or his reception of the Blessed Sacrament had saved his life.”¹

I was happy to learn that not only C. S. Lewis knew and believed in the Sacrament of Holy Unction for living and dying in the Lord.

Holy Unction includes the following:

1. The priest performing the sacrament meets privately with the recipient of the Holy Unction. It is also an opportunity to share the gospel with them.
2. During this private meeting the priest gives the sick the opportunity for confession. The aim is for them to gain peace with God through repentance and faith.
3. The liturgy, itself, contains an
 - introduction consisting mainly of confession and assurance of forgiveness
 - the Liturgy of the Word
 - the Liturgy of Anointing
 - Liturgy of the Holy Communion, and
 - the Concluding Rite

¹ See, the Introduction by Walter Hooper (ed.) C. S. Lewis, *Weight of Glory* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1980), p. xii

PART ONE

Ancient Perspectives of the Holy Unction

1

The Origins of the Holy Unction

The Church has always believed that God can heal. In both the Old Testament and New Testament, God repeatedly responded to people's request for healing. Jesus "went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness."² In Acts of Apostles, we see numerous people being healed when the apostles, deacons, and believers laid their hands.

The Holy Unction is specifically linked to St. James' instruction in God's Word, "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the

² St. Matthew 9:35

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Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.”³ Anointing with oil was an Old Testament symbol of the Holy Spirit. Anointing oil was used when Aaron was consecrated as high priest,⁴ and both Saul⁵ and David⁶ were anointed as kings.

Apostles knew perfectly well that God had the power to heal, and not man,⁷ and this was performed by the Holy Spirit.⁸ Thus anointing with oil, when praying for the sick, was an early practice carried out from the time of the Apostles.

The practice of taking the Eucharist to the sick was practiced from the earliest days of the church. By the time of the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD, the practice of taking the Eucharist to those who were deathly ill was known as ‘Viaticum.’ The thirteenth Canon of the Nicene Council affirms the practice of ‘Viaticum’ and upholds that even as early as the fourth century

³ James 5:14-16

⁴ Leviticus 8:12

⁵ 1 Samuel 10:1

⁶ 1 Samuel 16:13

⁷ Acts 3:16, 4:10, 15:12, 19:11

⁸ Acts 1:8, Romans 15:9, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11

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it was considered to be an ancient practice/tradition of the church.

The church fathers thought of this “last and most indispensable Viaticum” as spiritual food, to either help bring healing or to provide inner spiritual strength, and hope for those who are very close to death.

Throughout the history of the church, anointing with holy oil and praying for the sick was practiced. And, ‘Believers Eastern Church’ is part of this one holy church and continues in this journey of Faith and Practices of past 2000 years.

2

Preparation for the Holy Unction

The Holy Unction can be performed in hospitals, homes, institutions or churches.

The priest performing the Holy Unction should be dressed in their clergy vestments, including their pastoral stole. Holy Unction is a pastoral and shepherd's function.

Consecrated Oil

The priest leading the Holy Unction sacrament should use the oil consecrated by the bishops for this purpose. If there is none available, the priest should consecrate the oil.

Holy Communion

The Holy Communion is the most tangible means for the participant to believe in the meaning of Christ's sacrificial death and resurrection for our redemption.

Holy Unction

If the Lord chooses to heal the sick, they must be encouraged to continue believe in Jesus as Lord and follow Him by faith. Miracles are signs that direct us to a greater miracle of salvation of soul from sin and damnation.¹

¹St. John 20:30-31.

3

Performing the Holy Unction

When the Holy Unction is performed at the hospital or homes, bread and wine that were already consecrated during a Holy Communion celebration should be brought. The handling of the bread and wine should be done with reverence, both in transporting as well as at the place where the sacrament is performed.

If the Holy Unction is done in the church, during the Holy Communion, anointing with oil and praying for the sick persons can be done right after the sharing of peace.

The priest should acquire knowledge of the sick person's spiritual and physical needs beforehand and become acquainted with the family, friends and others who are present. If possible and appropriate, he should try to

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involve the family in as much of the celebration as possible; for instance, in the reading of one of the Scripture passages or other parts where laity help in the conduct of service.

Regardless of whether or not the Holy Unction is celebrated as part of the Holy Communion, the priest should meet with the recipient(s) beforehand as well as the family. As the Holy Unction's focus is to bring healing to body, soul and spirit, the gospel is shared at this time, in the hope of bringing true spiritual healing and peace with God to those who are far away from Christ. The priest can use his own discretion on sharing the Communion with the whole family or only with the individual.

Confession should be practiced in the normal way according to the Prayer of Confession and Declaration of Absolution in the Liturgy for Holy Communion. Also, if the patient wants his or her confession to be made only to the priest, then that is to be done privately. And, if they need to make restitution for any offense, the priest can give instructions to carry it out or depute someone to do it on his or her behalf. The priest then declares absolution to the patient.

PART TWO

Liturgy of the Holy Unction

4

The Sacrament of Holy Communion

Greeting

Priest: Let us prepare our hearts to believe God and receive His manifold blessings.

[If desired, a chorus or hymn can be sung. The priest makes the sign of the Cross ✠ and says:]

P: ✠ Glory be to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

C: ✠ As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

P: Holy, Holy, Holy, the Lord Almighty, heaven and earth are filled with Your glory. Hosanna in the highest!

C: Blessed is He who has come and is to come in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

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P: Holy are you, O God.

C: Holy are you, Almighty.

P: Holy are you, Immortal.

C: Crucified ✠ for us, Lord Messiah, have mercy on us.

[Repeat this three times]

P: Lord, have mercy on us.

C: Lord, be gracious to us. Lord, have mercy on us and accept our adoration and service.

P: Praise to You, O Lord.

C: Praise to You, O Creator.

All: Praise to You Lord, our Messiah, for being merciful to us sinners. Bless O Lord.

P: Our Father in Heaven

C: Hallowed be Your name,

Your kingdom come,

Your will be done,

On earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts,

As we forgive our debtors.

And do not lead us into temptation,

But deliver us from the evil one.

Holy Unction

For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

Amen.

P: My dear friends, we are gathered today in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ who is present among us. The Word of God tells us that Jesus gave His life so that we might be saved from our sins and that we might be healed, and the Gospel states that Jesus healed all those that came to Him of every sickness and disease among the people. And St. James, the Lord's brother, commanded us that if there are sick among us, the elders are "to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven." Let us pray for our sick brother/sister [Name] and ask for the grace and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to save him/her and raise him/her up.

Confession

[Now give the opportunity for the patient if he/she chooses to privately make confession. All those gathered leaves the room for the confession time. After the Confession and Absolution, they can come in and join in the rest of the program]

P: As you prepare yourself to receive the Holy Unction, it is important for you to confess your

Holy Unction

sins and failures and ask the Almighty God for His forgiveness and cleansing.

[The priest can lead the patient to repeat the prayer of confession after him]

Patient: Most Merciful God, I confess that I have sinned against You, Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, in thought, word and deed, by what I have done, and what I have left undone.

I have not loved You with all my heart; I have not loved my neighbours as myself. I am truly sorry and humbly repent of my sins.

Please have mercy on my soul. I believe Your Word that, when I call upon You, You forgive all my sins and that You are able to heal me from all my diseases.

I believe that Jesus died on the cross to save me from eternal damnation and also to heal my body, soul and spirit. Please forgive all my sins that I have done knowingly and unknowingly. I reject Satan and all his influences and believe in Jesus who is my Lord. Thank You for hearing my prayer, in Jesus' name. ✠ Amen.

Declaration of Absolution

[Raising right hand, the priest says to the patient]

P: Our merciful and compassionate God has forgiven your sins. May the Holy Spirit, through

Jesus Christ, our Lord, strengthen you to receive the promises of His Word that you may dwell with Him in life eternal.

C: Amen

P: Lord Jesus, You healed the sick; Kyrie-eleison. (Lord, have mercy)

C: Kyrie-eleison. (Lord, have mercy)

P: Lord Jesus, You forgave sinners; Kyrie-eleison. (Lord, have mercy)

C: Kyrie-eleison. (Lord, have mercy)

P: Lord Jesus, You gave us yourself to heal us and bring us strength; Kyrie-eleison. (Lord, have mercy)

C: Kyrie-eleison. (Lord, have mercy)

5

Ministry of the Word

[According to the circumstances, the priest should choose the Gospel reading taken from one of the following passages: St. Matthew 11:25-30, St. Mark 2:1-12, St. Luke 7:18b-23]

P: Let us listen with reverence to the reading of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to St. Matthew/St. Mark/St. Luke/St. John, chapter [chapter number], verses [verse] to [verse]

[With his right hand extended toward the people, the priest makes the sign of the Cross ✠ and says]

P: ✠ Peace be with you all.

[Those present, receives the blessing by making the sign of the Cross ✠]

C: ✠ And with your spirit.

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[The chosen passage is read at this time]

P: This is the Gospel of our Lord.

C: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

[With his right hand extended toward the people, the priest makes the sign of the Cross ✠and says]

P: ✠Peace be with you all.

[Those present, receive the blessing by making the sign of the Cross✠]

C: ✠And with your spirit.

[The priest may give a brief explanation of the reading, to encourage the faith of those present, helping them to understand the significance of the passage to the current situation]

6

Anointing With Oil

Litany

[The priest may adapt the Litany according to the condition of the sick person]

P: My brothers and sisters, with our prayer of faith let us seek God on behalf of our brother/sister [Name]

P: Lord Jesus, You bore our weakness and carried our sorrows; Kyrie-eleison. (Lord, have mercy)

C: Kyrie-eleison. (Lord, have mercy)

P: You felt compassion for the multitudes and healed their sicknesses and diseases; Kyrie-eleison. (Lord, have mercy)

C: Kyrie-eleison. (Lord, have mercy)

P: You commanded Your apostles to lay their

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hands on the sick in Your name; Kyrie-eleison.
(Lord, have mercy)

C: Kyrie-eleison. (Lord, have mercy)

P: We come to You on behalf of our brother/
sister [Name], Free him/her from all harm;
Kyrie-eleison. (Lord, have mercy)

C: Kyrie-eleison. (Lord, have mercy)

P: Free him/her from sin and all temptation;
Kyrie-eleison. (Lord, have mercy)

C: Kyrie-eleison. (Lord, have mercy)

P: Relieve the sufferings of all the sick [here
present]; Kyrie-eleison. (Lord, have mercy)

C: Kyrie-eleison. (Lord, have mercy)

P: Assist all those dedicated to the care of the
sick; Kyrie-eleison. (Lord, have mercy)

C: Kyrie-eleison. (Lord, have mercy)

P: Give life and health to our brother/sister
[Name], on whom we lay our hands in your
name; Kyrie-eleison. (Lord, have mercy)

C: Kyrie-eleison. (Lord, have mercy)

Laying on of Hands

*[The priest anoints the forehead of the sick person by making the
sign of the Cross three times while saying ✠ the following prayer]*

Holy Unction

P: Through this holy anointing, may the Lord in His love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit. May the Lord, who can set you free from your sin, save you and raise you up.

C: Amen.

[The priest lays his hands on the sick person's head and prays]

P: Let us pray.

Prayer

P: Father in heaven, through this holy anointing, kindly grant comfort to his/her suffering. When he/she is afraid, give him/her courage; when afflicted, provide him/her patience; when dejected, grant him/her hope, and when alone, assure him/her of the support of Your holy people. Heal his/her sickness and forgive his/her sins; expel all afflictions of mind and body; mercifully restore him/her to full health, and enable him/her to resume his/her former duties, for You are the Lord forever and ever.

C: Amen.

Before Surgery

P: God of compassion, our human weakness lays claim to Your strength. We pray that You would grant healing to (Name), whether through the skills of surgeons and nurses or by the healing power of Your Holy Spirit. May

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Your servant respond to Your healing will and be reunited with us at Your altar of praise. Grant this through Christ our Lord. We ask this according to Your Word and in the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

C: Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

[The priest returns to standing and with arms extended in invitation, says]

P: Let us join our hearts in the prayer that our Lord Jesus taught us to pray:

P: Our Father in Heaven

All: Hallowed be Your name,

Your kingdom come,

Your will be done,

On earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts,

As we forgive our debtors.

And do not lead us into temptation,

But deliver us from the evil one.

For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

7

Giving the Holy Communion

[Bread and Wine, which are already blessed during the celebration of Holy Communion, are brought for the sick person to receive the Eucharist. The blessed Bread and Wine is always carried in the container specially made for the purpose]

P: ✠Glory be to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Spirit

C: ✠As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be – Amen.

[Priest raising the right hand, makes the sign of the Cross ✠three times]

P: The Love of God the Father ✠ the grace of the only begotten Son ✠ and the communion and abiding presence of the Holy Spirit ✠be with you all, dearly beloved forever.

[Those present, make the sign of the Cross ✠ themselves and receive the blessings]

C: ✠And with your spirit.

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[With extended hands, the priest says:]

P: The Holy Body and Holy Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, broken and shed on Golgotha (Calvary) for the forgiveness of our debts and remission of our sins, are given to you for the health and healing of the body and souls. Receive them with thanksgiving, remembering that Christ died for you.

[Priest serves Holy Communion by intinction, placing the holy element in the mouth]

P: This is the body and blood of Christ.✠

Prayer

P: Let us pray.

P: We thank You, all-powerful and ever-living God, for the grace to partake of the Holy Communion. May the body and blood of Christ, Your Son be for our brother/sister (Name) life and salvation for body and soul. Father, we give all the glory and honour to You, to the only begotten Son and to the Holy Spirit. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen

C: Amen.

8

Concluding Rite

Blessing

P: May the God of all consolation bless you in every way and grant you hope all the days of your life.

C: Amen.

P: May God restore you to health and grant you salvation.

C: Amen.

P: May God fill your heart with peace and lead you to eternal life.

C: Amen.

P: May Almighty God bless you, ✠the Father, ✠ the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit.

C: ✠And with your spirit.

[Those present make the sign of the Cross ✠ themselves and receive the blessings]

Holy Unction

Benediction

P: ✠May the Love of God the Father, ✠the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ ✠and the communion and abiding presence of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forever.

C: ✠And with your spirit.

APPENDIX

Bible Promises for Healing

Exodus 15:26

The Lord said, “If you listen carefully to the LORD your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, who heals you.”

Exodus 23:25

Worship the LORD your God, and his blessing will be on your food and water. I will take away sickness from among you.

Deuteronomy 7:15

The LORD will keep you free from every disease. He will not inflict on you the horrible diseases you knew in Egypt, but he will inflict them on all who hate you.

Psalm 30:2-3

LORD my God, I called to you for help, and you healed me. You, LORD, brought me up from the realm of the dead; you spared me from going down to the pit.

Psalm 41:3

The LORD sustains them on their sickbed and restores them from their bed of illness.

Psalm 103:2-3

Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases.

Psalm 107:20

He sent out his word and healed them; he rescued them from the grave.

Psalm 147:3

He heals the broken hearted and binds up their wounds.

Isaiah 53:5

But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.

Jeremiah 17:14

Heal me, LORD, and I will be healed; save me and I will be saved, for you are the one I praise.

Hosea 6:1

Come, let us return to the LORD. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds.

1 Peter 2:24

“He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.”

