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ANOINTING WITH THE HOLY OIL OF ST. SHARBEL
— A NEW PHENOMENON IN CATHOLIC PRACTICE

A b s t r a c t. In recent years, especially in eastern Slovakia, a new phenomenon has emerged in Catholic practice — anointing with the Holy Oil of St. Sharbel. Although the rite of such anointing is not found in any liturgical book, some Catholic priests of the Latin rite, especially in this part of the country, confer it to the Catholics of their rite. Catholics from various parts of Slovakia, western Poland, Ukraine, Moravia and others also take part in it. The author of the article mainly uses the comparative method, comparing this practice with the documents of the Magisterium and the bishop guidelines. He tries to find out if it is a sacramental in the Maronite church. If so, he states that the priests of the Latin rite cannot confer sacramental of the Maronite church without permission. The aim of the article is to find an answer to the question of whether it is a sacramental within the Catholic Church of the Latin rite or a rite that belongs to the field of human faith, such as immersion in the Lourdes water, during which several miraculous healings have taken place, but which is not accompanied by any assistance by a priest or deacon.

Keywords: anointing; oil; st. Sharbel; liturgical books; sacramentals.

INTRODUCTION

The Slovak Society for Catholic Theology organized a conference in Bratislava entitled *Liturgy, Fellowship, Testimony and Service of Our Church* on 12 November 2020. The invitation of the conference organizer included the

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following: ‘In the discussion and solution of a specific problem in the contributions of the participants, we do not want to lose sight of the experience of faith.’¹

I appreciate that the topics of the conference were specific, focused on the Slovak environment, which, however, in religious life to a considerable extent follows in the footsteps of Western Europe and other countries of the so-called first world from an economic point of view.

Therefore, the offered solutions may also be inspiring for foreign environments. Not only the solution of highly specialised topics has a place in theology, e.g., to analyse the Greek conjunction *kai* and write a dissertation on it,² but perhaps even more of those aimed at solving specific situations in which the Catholic Church or Christians live now.

¹ Cf. Slovenská spoločnosť katolíckej teológie a Rímskokatolícka bohoslovecká fakulta UK v spolupráci s TF TU, TF KU, GKT PU a s Teologickou komisiou KBS, *Pozvánka na vedeckú konferenciu otvorenú aj pre doktorandov teológie: Liturgia, spoločenstvo, svedectvo a služba našej Cirkvi vo štvrtok 23. apríla 2020* (Bratislava: RK CMBF UK, 2020), 1, https://frch.uniba.sk/fileadmin/rkcmbf/konferencie/TeologickaKonferencia2020/Liturgia_spolocenstvo_svedctvo_a_sluzba_nasej_Cirkvi.pdf; Internationale Theologische Kommission, *Die Synodalität in Leben und Sendung der Kirche*, 2018, points 75. and 111–114, https://www.vatican.va/roma_n-curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_201_80302_synodalita_ge.html

Dialogue was one of the strongest features of the council; cf. Polská biskupská konference, “Dialog a tolerance,” *Teologické texty* 1996, 1: 28; Karl Lehmann, “Evangelium a dialog — duše koncilní obnovy,” *Teologické texty* 1995, 5: 151–154; Karl Lehmann, “Dialog jako forma komunikace v církvi,” *Teologické texty* 1996, 1: 2–6; Joachim Wanke, “Hranice dialogu,” *Teologické texty* 1996, 1: 7–8; Hans Waldenfels, “Od misie k nové evangelizaci,” *Teologické texty* 2014, 4: 215; “Kardinál Martini a Umberto Eco — dialog,” *Teologické texty* 2001, 2: 71; Timothy Noble, “Záblesky vykoupení,” *Teologický sborník* 2002, 2: 32; Karel Říha, “Pravda a dialog,” *Teologické texty* 1996, 1: 8–12; Karel Říha, “Pravda vždy větší. K diskusi o interpretaci náboženské zvěsti a věřeného obsahu ve filozofii a teologii,” *Studia theologica* 2005, 4: 58–62, <https://studiatheologica.eu/pdfs/sth/2005/04/07.pdf>; Ctirad Václav Pospíšil, “Ježíš je Kristus a Spasitel,” *Teologické texty* 2002, 2-3: 69–72; Michal Altrichter, “Rahner versus Ratzinger?,” *Teologické texty* 2005, 5: 185–190; Richard Schaeffler, “Podmínky kultury dialogu,” *Teologické texty* 2000, 1: 11–15; Marie Kolářová, “Svoboda projevu v církvi — meze a prostor pro dialog,” *Teologické texty* 2008, 4: 208–211; Pavel Blažek, “Akademická dráha, nebo pastorec?,” *Teologické texty* 2006, 2: 67–73; Ludmila Freiová, “Poznámky k dialogu,” *Teologické texty* 2004, 2: 78; Václav Frei, “K otevřenosti vůči kritice,” *Teologické texty* 1995, 5: 166–168; Jolana Poláková, “Horizontála a vertikála dialogu,” *Teologické texty* 1996, 1: 12–13; Oto Mádr, “Jak se nevede dialog,” *Teologické texty* 1992, 4: 150; Josef Dolista, “Perichoréze iniciačních svátostí,” *Teologické texty* 1996, 4: 50; Jiří Kašný, “Kanonické souvislosti k diskusi o cílech manželství,” *Studia theologica* 2005, 4: 63, <https://studiatheologica.eu/pdfs/sth/2005/04/08.pdf>

² Cf. Imrich Gazda, *Neobávam sa liberálov, ale tých, čo šírja nenávisť*, <https://svetkrestanstva.postoj.sk/51960/neobavam-sa-liberalov-ale-tych-co-siria-nenavist>

1. ARBITRARINESS IN ACTIONS OF PRIESTS IN LITURGY

The scientific guarantors of the conference included ‘arbitrariness in the actions of priests’ among the problems that the participants should discuss. It also applies to the liturgy.

The Constitution of Second Vatican Council on the Sacred Liturgy teaches that ‘regulation of the [...] liturgy depends solely [...] on the Apostolic See and [...], on the bishop. [...] no other person, even if he be a priest, may add, remove, or change anything in the liturgy on his own authority.’³

‘Liturgy is a constitutive element of the holy and living Tradition.’⁴ ‘No sacramental rite may be modified or manipulated at the will of the minister or the community. Even the supreme authority in the Church may not change the liturgy arbitrarily, but only in the obedience of faith and with [...] respect for the mystery of the liturgy.’⁵ The *Code of Canon Law* states that ‘[...] bishop is bound to promote the common discipline of the whole Church and therefore to urge the observance of all ecclesiastical laws. He is to exercise vigilance so that abuses do not creep into ecclesiastical discipline, especially regarding [...] the celebration of the sacraments and sacramentals [...].’⁶

The *Directory for the Ministry and the Life of Priests* states that it is necessary to draw attention to what is related to love and respect for liturgical norms. The liturgy is the exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ, in which the priest must have awareness of having to faithfully obey the Church. The ordering and guidance of the liturgy depends solely upon the authority of the Church, namely, that of the Apostolic See and the diocesan Bishop. The priest, therefore, may not add, remove, or change anything in the

³ Second Vatican Council, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 22, § 1 and 3, [https://d2y1pz2y630308.cloudfront.net/5032/documents/2014/0/SACROSA NCTUM%20CONCILIUM-%20VATICAN%20II%20CONSTITUTION.pdf](https://d2y1pz2y630308.cloudfront.net/5032/documents/2014/0/SACROSA%20NCTUM%20CONCILIUM-%20VATICAN%20II%20CONSTITUTION.pdf); cf. Second Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, 26, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html; John Paul II, *Apostolic Letter Spiritus et sponsa*, 15, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/2003/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_20031204_spiritus-et-sponsa.html; Jan Matějka, “Biskup — hlavní liturg v diecézi,” *Teologické texty* 1994, 4: 115–117.

⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1124, https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/___P33.HTM

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1125.

⁶ *Code of Canon Law*, can. 392, § 1 and § 2, internet edition: https://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/cic_index_en.html; cf. Jaroslav Polc, “Zápas o liturgickou obnovu,” *Teologické texty* 1994, 4: 111–115.

liturgy on his own initiative. This is especially true for the celebration of the sacraments, which are acts of Christ and the Church par excellence, and which the priest administers in the person of Christ the Head and in the name of the Church for the good of the faithful. The latter have a true right to participate in liturgical celebrations as the Church, so wills and not according to the personal likes of a particular minister, nor according to unapproved and unusual rites, which are expressions of specific groups that tend to isolate themselves from the universality of the People of God.⁷

The principle from the older textbook of dogmatic theology still applies that the conferral of sacraments requires the maintenance of sections.⁸

2. ANOINTINGS WITH OILS OF THE SAINTS

In my current view, which, of course, may change for relevant theological reasons, the ‘arbitrariness in the actions of priests’ is also reflected in anointings with the oils of the saints.

2.1. Anointing with Saint Philomena’s oil

Several hundred Catholics came to the Church of the Ursulines in Bratislava⁹ on November 21st, 2019 to honour the Relic of St. Philomena and be anointed with her oil, originating from the Italian Mugnana del Cardinale — the place where she was buried.¹⁰

In contrast, during the preparatory novena and holy mass on the ninth annual pilgrimage of the Archfraternity of St. Philomena in Spišské Podhradie in north-eastern Slovakia, anointing with her oil was not conferred. Only religious events took place, generally recognised in the Catholic Church, e.g., a lecture on the saint’s life and the history of her cult, pilgrims’ testimonies

⁷ Cf. Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and the Life of Priests*, 59. New edition 11 February 2013 (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2013); <http://theromeexperience.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Directory-for-the-Ministry-and-Life-of-Priests.pdf>; Vladimír Thurzo, “Mimoriadny obrad slávenia svätej omše z pohľadu čnosti nábožnosti,” *Acta facultatis theologiae Universitatis Comenianae Bratislaviensis* 2020, 2: 7–25.

⁸ Cf. Jozef Uhrin, *Prednášky zo špeciálnej dogmatiky II.*, 3. edition (Bratislava: Cirkevné nakladateľstvo, 1990), 125.

⁹ Bratislava is the capital of Slovakia.

¹⁰ Cf. TK KBS, *Svätá Filoména pritiahla do kostola uršulínok v Bratislave stovky ľudí*, <https://www.tkkbs.sk/view.php?cisloclanku=20191121041>

of spiritual or bodily healings through her intercession, blessing with the relic of the saint and candlelight procession¹¹.

2.2. Anointing with rare rose oil

The magazine of the Archdiocese of Bamberg in Bavaria mentioned the anointing with a rare rose oil which, during ecumenical worship in the Catholic Basilica of the Fourteen Holy Helpers in *Vierzehnheiligen* was conferred by the Catholic priest from the Franciscans and by the evangelical pastor to participants from both churches.¹² A more detailed description of the rare rose oil was not given in the article.

2.3. Anointing with other consecrated oils

During the COVID-19 pandemic in Slovakia, at the beginning of April 2020, I received information by e-mail from a certain priest who received it from a woman. It says: ‘I am sending an email that I have received and is interesting for today. A message from Greek monasteries: All the monks from more than twenty orthodox monasteries located on the Greek hill of Athos [...] were united in prayers during the twelve-hour vigil [...] on March 29th, 2020.’

During the vigil, the Virgin Mary appeared to one of the monks and left this message for all Christians to help prevent the evil of the coronavirus: The Virgin Mary said to the monk: ‘[...] take the holy oil and make the sign with it on the door. Also, anoint the forehead of all family members with holy oil or olive oil [...].’¹³

Similarly, one lady in the Dominican Republic received almost the same message from Jesus Christ yesterday [i.e., April 7th, 2020] at 4:00 AM: ‘Just as Moses was ordered to anoint house doorways with blood, I beg you. Anoint the foreheads of the people in the house with holy oil or olive oil mixed with holy water. During the anointing, say these words: I seal you with the blood of Jesus shed on the Cross of Calvary, so that the Angel of Death may not touch your body or your abode.’

¹¹ Cf. Jozef Sendrej, “Ctitelia sv. Filomény sa stretli v Spišskom Podhradí, Kapitula.” *Diecézny časopis Spišského biskupstva* 2021, 4: 7–8, <http://dieceza.kapitula.sk/userfiles/file/kapitula-4-2021.pdf>; Gerhard Ludwig Müller, *Katholische Dogmatik, Für Studium und Praxis der Theologie* (Freiburg—Basel—Wien, 1995), 641.

¹² Cf. GK, “Durchkreuzte Lebenspläne sind eine Chance,” *Heinrichsblatt* 2019, 26: 19.

¹³ Cf. <https://youtu.be/lmodlDz6UVA> (10.11.2021).

Some members of the evangelistic group in the Dominican Republic with whom I had previously worked, without knowing anything about these messages, felt the same call in their hearts through the Holy Spirit on various occasions; to anoint the doors of their homes with holy oil and/or holy water. Enrique.’¹⁴

Following this information, I asked the priest in question: When the Virgin Mary said to the [orthodox] monk: ‘[...] take the holy oil and make the sign with it on the door,’ what oil should he use?

- 1) Some oil that is a sacramental in the Orthodox church?
- 2) If so, what is the name of the sacramental?
- 3) Or from some other rite?

Furthermore, when one lady received a message from Jesus Christ: ‘Anoint the foreheads of the people in the house with holy oil or olive oil,’ what oil should she use?

- 1) The one used during a sacramental?
- 2) If yes, during which?

3) Or from some other rite? I got an answer to these questions from the priest: ‘I do not know much about eastern churches, what oils they have. I will not disseminate information if I cannot verify its authenticity. Thanks for the guidance.’¹⁵

Apart from the topic of authenticity of the private revelation of Jesus Christ in the Dominican Republic on April 7th, 2020 at 4:00 AM to one lady, this report shows that several priests and laity do not reflect on the practice of anointing with ‘holy oil,’ from which it suddenly came, although it was not known until now, what church authority approved its practice in the Catholic Church, but they thoughtlessly accepted and promoted it.¹⁶

2.4. Anointing with the Holy Oil of St. Sharbel

In recent months, devotion spreads throughout Slovakia for the Lebanese saint, St. Sharbel, which in many cases also includes the anointing with the Holy Oil of St. Sharbel.

¹⁴ E-mail from L.M., 8. 4. 2020 (located in the author’s private archive).

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Cf. Kongregácia pre Boží kult a disciplínu sviatostí, *Rímsky rituál obnovený podľa rozhodnutia Druhého vatikánskeho koncilu uvedený do platnosti pápežom Pavlom VI. Benedikcionál* (Trnava: Spolok svätého Vojtecha, 2007); Konferencia biskupov Slovenska, *Požehnanie*, (Trnava: Spolok svätého Vojtecha, 2009); Jan Janicki, “Liturgia,” in: *Słownik teologiczny*, red. Andrzej Zuberbier, wydanie 2. rozszerzone (Katowice: Księgarnia św. Jacka, 1998), 266.

For example, hundreds of Catholics worshiped St. Sharbel during an evening Holy Mass in the Cathedral of St. Elisabeth in Košice¹⁷ on October 22nd, 2019, whom they worship there every month on the twenty-second day. The celebration of the Eucharist was led by the auxiliary bishop Mons. Marek Forgáč with several priests from other dioceses in Slovakia. At the end of the meeting, those present could receive the anointing with the Holy Oil of St. Sharbel. Many pilgrims came from Košice and the surrounding area, but there were also pilgrims from Spišská diocese, from Trnava, Piešťany, Bratislava, and also from abroad, from Ukraine, Moravia, western Poland, and many others.¹⁸ Another report from the Press Office for the Bishops of Slovakia Conference invited Catholics to the church in Záhradné¹⁹ on January 26th, 2020. The program included the anointing with the Holy Oil of St. Sharbel.²⁰

3. SACRAMENTALS

However, notice the official Catholic Church teaching on this topic. Sacramentals are blessings and observances in which the Church prays for certain objects so that the people who use them grow in faith and charity.²¹ Sacramentals are instituted for the sanctification of certain ministries of the Church, certain states of life, a great variety of circumstances in Christian life, and the use of many things helpful to man. In accordance with bishops' pastoral decisions, they can also respond to the needs, culture, and special history of the Christian people of a particular region or time. They always include a prayer, often accompanied by a specific sign, such as the laying on of hands, the sign of the cross, or the sprinkling of holy water.²² The Apo-

¹⁷ Košice in eastern Slovakia is the second largest city in Slovakia, the seat of the eastern ecclesiastical province.

¹⁸ Cf. TK KBS, *Stovky ľudí si v katedrále svätej Alžbety uctili svätca z Libanonu*, <https://www.tkkbs.sk/view.php?cisloclanku=20191023023>

¹⁹ Záhradné is a municipality in eastern Slovakia.

²⁰ Cf. TK KBS, *Vo farnosti Záhradné budú modlitby a pomazanie olejom sv. Šarbela*, <https://www.tkkbs.sk/view.php?cisloclanku=20200118007>

²¹ Cf. Michael Schmaus, *Sviatosti* (Rome: Slovenský ústav sv. Cyrila a Metoda, 1981), 59; Piero Petrosillo, "Sacramentali," in: *Il Cristianesimo dalla A alla Z. Lessico della fede cristiana* (Milan: San Paolo, 1995), 347; Renzo Gerardi, "Sacramento/Sacramentali," in: *Lexicon. Dizionario Teologico Enciclopedico*, Vito Mancuso (ed.), 3. edition (Piemme: Casale Monferrato, 1997), 911.

²² Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1668; Second Vatican Council, *Constitution on*

stolic See alone can establish new sacramentals, authentically interpret those already received, or abolish or change any of them.²³ In confecting or administering sacramentals, the rites and formulas approved by the authority of the Church are to be observed carefully²⁴. Due to the external signs of the sacramentals, they may consist only of words, such as liturgical prayers, or only of things, such as eating the sacred bread.²⁵

4. CATHOLIC ATTITUDE TO THE MENTIONED ANOINTINGS

The Catechism of the Catholic Church includes among the examples of blessings that relate to objects, the blessing of holy oils,²⁶ but not the anointings with the oils of St. Philomena, St. Sharbel, rare rose oil, holy oil, olive oil or olive oil mixed with holy water.²⁷

4.1. Water of St. Ignatius

Compared to anointing with the Holy Oil of St. Sharbel, we see a different approach to the sacramental, known especially in Ignatian spirituality, which is the ‘water of St. Ignatius.’

Water blessed through the intercession of St. Ignatius, the founder of the Jesuits, is also called miraculous or holy water. The faithful of the Catholic Church began to use it shortly after the death of St. Ignatius and it brings graces for which ordinary means have not been sufficient for almost 450 years. Drinking the water consecrated by the touch of the relics of the saints to obtain special grace from God is a very ancient custom among Catholics. Protestants also know this miraculous water.

the Sacred Liturgy Sacrosanctum Concilium, 60; *Code of Canon Law*, can. 1166; *CCEO*, can. 867; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1667; Patric Maturkanič, *Pastoral practice in the light of the 21st century* (Morrisville: Lulu Publishing Company, 2021), 101–102; Uhrin, *Prednášky*, 127.

²³ Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, can. 1167, § 1.

²⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, can. 1167, § 2.

²⁵ Cf. Uhrin, *Prednášky*, 127; Ludwig Ott, *Grundriss der katholischen Dogmatik*, 10. edition (Vienna: Herder, 1981), 417.

²⁶ Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1672.

²⁷ Cf. Kongregácia pre Boží kult a disciplínu sviatostí, *Rímsky rituál. Benedikcionál*; Konferencia biskupov Slovenska, *Požehnanía*; Gerald O’Collins, Edward Farrugia, “Sacramentale,” in: *Dizionario sintetico di teologia* (Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995), 323.

According to the *Roman Ritual* by Pope Paul V from 1614, restored by Pope Pius XI in 1925 and again by Pope Benedict XVI in 2011, a Jesuit priest or other legitimate priest blesses the water with a special prayer and puts a relic or medallion of St. Ignatius in it.

Using the water of St. Ignatius brings graces to those who use it faithfully and devoutly.²⁸

It follows that blessing the water of St. Ignatius has a rite approved by the Roman bishop, which is in the *Roman Ritual*, but is still absent at the anointing with the Holy Oil of St. Sharbel.

4.2. Emerging questions

In connection with the above-mentioned ecclesiastical norms and teaching and as a sacramentology lecturer, I have the following questions looking at this new practice from a dogmatic point of view:²⁹

— What is anointing with the Holy Oil of St. Sharbel, performed by the priests of Latin rite? Sacramental?

— What liturgical book contains the rite of anointing with the Holy Oil of St. Sharbel?³⁰

— Based on what did the priests of the Latin rite introduced the anointing with the Holy Oil of St. Sharbel to Slovakia around 2019?³¹ The Holy Oil of St. Sharbel can be taken by pilgrims in Annaya.³² According to a participant in a pilgrimage to the grave of St. Sharbel, there is blessed olive oil in ampoules. The article does not state who blesses the Holy Oil of St. Sharbel — whether it is the priests of the Maronite church or someone else. It is not certain whether they also add fluid to it which flows from the side of St. Sharbel.³³ The information from the St. Joseph Maronite Catholic Church in the USA mentions that the Holy Oil of St. Sharbel is a blessed oil that traditionally is used to anoint the sick in the name of the Lord. Those who

²⁸ Cf. *Čo je voda sv. Ignáca?* (Bratislava, 22.5.2017), 2–3.

²⁹ Cf. Jozef Krupa, “Relevantné vieroučné a pastorálne témy o sviatosti krstu a birmovania,” *Acta facultatis theologicae Universitatis Comenianae Bratislaviensis* 2014, 1: 49–52.

³⁰ Cf. Sabine Pemsel-Maier, “Sakramentalien,” in: *Grundbegriffe der Dogmatik* (München: Don Bosco Verlag, 2003), 193.

³¹ During my pilgrimage to Lebanon in 2006, I also visited the Tomb of St. Sharbel. Anointing with the Holy Oil of St. Sharbel was not given in Slovakia at that time.

³² Cf. Ján Lauko, “Putovali sme za svätým Šarbelom,” *Katolícke noviny* 2019, 43: 3.

³³ Cf. Ján Lauko, “Pri hrobe svätého Šarbela uzdravuje viera,” *Vianočná príloha Katolíckych novín* 2019, 51/52: 12.

are anointed are strong of faith and pray to God through St. Sharbel to heal their minds, bodies and souls. The Holy Oil is typically applied to the forehead or the part of the body that is sick. It is necessary to say a prayer to God and St. Sharbel of your intentions and pray with great faith. The Healing Holy Oil of St. Sharbel is available from St. Joseph Maronite Catholic Church and can be shipped to any destination within the USA³⁴. However, again we do not know who blessed the oil — whether the Maronite church priests or someone else, or who anoints the sick — whether the Maronite church priests or someone else, or the pilgrims themselves. Other words of the information: ‘Those who are anointed are strong of faith and pray to God through St. Sharbel to heal their minds, bodies and souls. The Holy Oil is typically applied to the forehead or the part of the body that is sick. Say a prayer to God and St. Sharbel of your intentions and pray with great faith’³⁵ do not provide the necessary answers. If it is a blessed oil, it could be a sacramental within the Maronite church because it is not found in the Latin rite. The question is, if it is a sacramental within the Maronite church, can the priests of the Latin rite confer sacramental of the eastern catholic church? I’m not talking about receiving the anointing by the priests or laity of the Latin rite, which is given to them by the priests of one of the eastern catholic churches, in this case the Maronite.³⁶

I also wonder if it would be possible to compare the blessed Holy Oil of St. Sharbel with the Lourdes water, into which the Catholics enter, but without a blessing of a deacon or priest, or even of a member of the lay, who does nothing and is not present there? Immersion in the Lourdes water is held by Catholics or even people with a different belief, only as a manifestation of their human faith, based on several miracles from the past, confirmed by an independent medical commission. Since I myself completed this ritual in May 2001, I know it well. I have personal experience with it. Wouldn't it be enough for the Catholics of the Latin rite to use the blessed Holy Oil of St. Sharbel — perhaps by a Maronite Church priest — similar to the Lourdes water, as an ex-

³⁴ Cf. <http://www.stjosephphoenix.org/holy-oil> (10.11.2021).

³⁵ Cf. *ibid.*

³⁶ A directive from the *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism* applies here by analogy: ‘Blessings ordinarily given for the benefit of Catholics may also be given to other Christians who request them, according to the nature and object of the blessing’; Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*, 121, <http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/documenti/testo-in-inglese.html>

pression of their human faith in miraculous help through the intercession of St. Sharbel, also relying on several miracles from the past, without the priests of the Latin rite? The similarity with Lourdes for many healings also lies in the fact that Annaya is also called ‘the Lourdes of the Middle East.’

The answer to these questions is provided by the guidance from the Bratislava archbishop Stanislav Zvolenský on the blessing and use of oil: The Church uses oil in sacraments and sacramentals.

In the conferral of sacraments, olive oil is used as the oil of catechumens, oil of the Anointing of the Sick and sacred chrism, which is consecrated by the bishop.

In the category of sacramentals — as stated by the *Roman Ritual*, part Benedictional — oil may be blessed as food — most often by a common prayer along with other food and drinks — or as a sacrificial gift of religious motives on the occasion of a feast or in honour of the saints, which is not common in Slovakia.

The *Roman Ritual* in the *Concerning Exorcisms and Certain Supplications* section does not contain any blessing of oils for exorcism or liberation purposes.

The Bratislava Archbishop draws attention to these rules on the use of oil and asks us to comply with them due to various emerging information about the present or even recommended practice of requesting priestly blessing of the oil with the intention of using it as a means of spiritual healing, invigoration or liberation of people suffering from spiritual difficulties. It follows that such a practice is not correct.³⁷

CONCLUSION

The article presented the current state of my research on how anointing with the oils of saints can be characterised, especially the anointing with the Holy Oil of St. Sharbel, in terms of Catholic doctrine, in which category it can be classified. I pointed out the characteristics of sacramentals, whether it could be included in this area. However, I have not yet found any form in any liturgical book that would contain it. Therefore, I come with the hypothesis that the anointing with the Holy Oil of St. Sharbel is similar to the immersion in the Lourdes water. As the right approach to the anointing with the

³⁷ Cf. Arcibiskupský úrad v Bratislave, “Usmernenie o požehnávaní a používaní oleja,” *Acta Curiae Archiepiscopalis Bratislavensis* Arcibiskupský úrad, Bratislava, 2016, II., point 8: 5.

Holy Oil of St. Sharbel, I suggest that the Catholics practice it privately, similarly to the immersion in the Lourdes water, without intervention by priests or deacons. If any diocesan bishop recognises that the anointing with the Holy Oil of St. Sharbel is a sacramental, I recommend compiling a rite with rules on how to confer this sacramental. It is my intention to include it in a precise framework: either it belongs to the private sphere on the basis of substantiated human experience based on experience and medical opinions or it receives ecclesiastical approval by stating the method of its administration in the relevant liturgical book. The current practice of the anointing with the Holy Oil of St. Sharbel without specific guidelines and rite in the relevant liturgical book can be considered an example of arbitrariness in the actions of the priests which has no support in ecclesiastical approval.

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NAMASZCZENIE OLEJEM ŚW. SZARBELA
– NOWY FENOMEN W PRAKTYCE KATOLICKIEJ

S t r e s z c z e n i e

W ostatnich latach, zwłaszcza we wschodniej Słowacji, pojawia się w praktyce katolickiej nowe zjawisko – namaszczenie olejem św. Szarbela. Chociaż ceremonia tego namaszczenia nie znajduje się w żadnej księdze liturgicznej, niektórzy katolicyce kapłani obrządku łacińskiego, zwłaszcza w tej części kraju, udzielają go katolikom tego obrządku. Uczestniczą w nim rów-

nież katolicy z innych części Słowacji, zachodniej Polski, Ukrainy, Moraw i innych krajów. Autor stosuje w artykule przede wszystkim metodę porównawczą, porównując tę praktykę z dokumentami Urzędu Nauczycielskiego Kościoła i wytycznymi biskupa. Próbuje dowiedzieć się, czy tego typu sakramentalia są w kościele maronickim. Jeśli tak, to stwierdza, że kapłani obrządku łacińskiego nie mogą, bez pozwolenia, udzielać sakramentaliów kościoła maronickiego. Celem artykułu jest znalezienie odpowiedzi na pytanie, czy chodzi o sakramentalia w Kościele katolickim obrządku łacińskiego, czy o ceremonię należącą do strefy ludzkiej wiary, jak np. zanurzenie w wodzie w Lourdes, podczas którego miało miejsce kilka cudownych uzdrowień, ale której nie towarzyszy żadna asysta ze strony kapłana lub diakona.

Słowa kluczowe: namaszczenie; olej; św. Szarbel; księgi liturgiczne; sakramentalia.