

The Holy Muron

What it is, When it's used, How it's made and blessed

Holy Muron (pronounced “myo-ron”) is sanctified oil. *Muron* is a Greek word meaning “fragrant oil” or “essence flowing from a plant.” The word is derived from the root “to rub,” “to anoint.” Since early history, *muron* was made of olive oil together with various fragrant spices.

It was widely used by the eastern nations, mainly by the ancient Hebrews during feast days (Ps 23:5, Amos 6:6). In the days of Christ the tradition of pouring ointment on the head or the feet of the guest as a sign of honor was very much alive (Mk 14:3, Jn 12:3). According to the divine commandment given to the prophet Moses (Ex 30:23-30) the priests of

God used olive oil mixed with extensive, precious, incense, and various spices and flowers. The finest and the most precious of these was the ointment spikenard (Song 1:12, Mk 14:3).

From ancient times, muron has been employed in the Armenian Church during sacramental anointing services, such as baptism and ordination.

During **Baptism** (*mgerdoutyouin* in Armenian) the holy muron is used for Chrismation, which is conducted immediately after baptism in the Armenian Church.

In **Chrismation** (*troshtm*) the candidate is anointed in Christ and receives the Holy Spirit. The priest anoints the forehead, eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth, hands, heart, back, and feet with holy muron, and prays to God to bestow the gift of the Holy Spirit so that the recipient may live in righteousness and follow the Light of God. (Holy Communion is given for the first time after the anointing, where the candidate becomes a full member of the Body of Christ.)

The climax of **Holy Ordination** (*Sourp Dzernatroutyoun*) is the consecration of the candidate's forehead and hands with holy muron. As one's forehead is anointed, the candidate becomes a new person and receives a new name.

There is also a sacrament of spiritual healing, **Holy Anointing** (*vercheen odzoum*) in which the sick are anointed as a sign of Christ's care. This sacrament eventually became associated with a dying person, who would be blessed with holy oil (not muron) as the final anointing, otherwise known as the “Last Rites.” Today, this sacrament is reserved for the burial of clergy.

Holy Muron is made of olive oil blended with 40 different types of flowers and sweet-smelling herbs. During the consecration ceremony,

some remnant oil from the previous blessing is mixed into the cauldron with the new muron, linking it with the ancient past of the Armenian Church.

The Blessing of the Holy Muron is an ancient ceremony of the Armenian Church, which involves the manufacture and consecration of the holy muron. Holy muron is made of olive oil blended with 40 different types of flowers and sweet-smelling herbs. During the consecration ceremony, some remnant oil from the previous blessing is mixed into the cauldron with the new muron, linking it with the ancient past of the Armenian Church.

The blessing takes a great deal of preparation, which takes place at the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin. Forty days prior to the blessing, the distinctive silver cauldron used in the sanctification ceremony is filled with oil and positioned on the Altar of Descent, discreetly covered with an embroidered veil. For the next forty days—until the blessing ceremony itself—prayers are offered every evening in front of the cauldron.

The special service is conducted by the Catholicos of All Armenians about once every seven years. But it can also be performed during times of special significance to the Armenian people, such as the year of Armenia's independence referendum in 1991, or the 1700th anniversary of Armenia's conversion to Christianity in 2001, or the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, and the canonization of our holy martyrs, in 2015.

His Holiness the Catholicos performs the blessing in a ceremony of splendid pageantry, employing ancient relics of Armenian history, and in the presence of clergy and statesmen of international standing.

Eventually, the sanctified muron is distributed to every Armenian diocese, and from there to every Armenian parish in the world.



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