



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS ^{OF} ATLANTA

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΑΤΛΑΝΤΑΣ

*Protocol No. 03/17
February 14, 2017*

Holy Unction

Within the Holy Orthodox Church, many customs and traditions are associated with services. Some of these customs and traditions are kept and even encouraged by the Church to be used and upheld. Unfortunately, some of the customs and traditions are outside of the traditions of the Church, and have distorted the correct and proper teaching. This is especially true with the Sacrament of Holy Unction.

Many of the Metropolis' and the Archdiocesan District have adoptive policies recognizing the sanctity of the sacrament and that, as with other sacraments of the Church, it is not one distributed by the laypeople. It is therefore time for us to do the same.

Just as we do not give Holy Communion to the faithful to take home, neither do we give Holy Unction so that they would administer it either to themselves or to other family members. As you know, the clergy always administer the Mysteries.

It may be that some of the faithful are confused by the similarity of "holy oil" taken from the kandili hanging before certain icons or the relics of saints, which is often given to the pious faithful. This oil is taken home, much like holy water, and is similarly used when a member of the family is ill or troubled.

The custom of placing a cotton swab (or anything similar) in a plastic bag to be taken home by the faithful is not appropriate. There is no reason for doing this since the clergy administer the Mystery, and in addition, this cotton saturated with Holy Unction is all too often disregarded or simply thrown away in the trash.

We have an obligation to clearly teach the faithful about the difference between Holy Unction and the holy oils received from places of pious veneration. The former should be handled as we do Holy Communion and the latter like holy water.

Make every effort to stress to the faithful that the Sacrament **WILL NOT** be given to "take-home." Please distribute this protocol along with announcements in your mailings, newsletters, weekly bulletins, websites, social media, etc. so that the faithful are fully informed before the sacrament takes place.

Included with this protocol is a sample insert for your publications.

This protocol is to be applied so that we may have uniformity within the Holy and God-protected Metropolis of Atlanta, and, as St. James wrote: "*Is any among you sick? Let him call for the presbyters of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.*" (James 5:14)

The Sacrament of Holy Unction

All Parishioners should attempt to attend the service and be anointed with the blessed oil of Holy Unction. As the Priest anoints the forehead, cheeks, chin, palm and back of hands, we should ask God's forgiveness.

Therefore, family members will no longer be permitted to take Holy Unction home, however the Priest may anoint those unable to attend the service of Holy Unction on Holy Wednesday on another day of Holy Week.

For those who are shut-ins, homebound, or infirm, please contact your priest before Holy Week for a visitation and the offering of healing prayers and the Holy Sacraments.