

## DIOCESAN LITURGY COUNCIL

### Sacred Oils 2024 - Composition

The 2024 Chrism is prepared by the Diocese of Cairns and used by a significant number of dioceses across Australia and beyond.

The mix of the **Oil of Chrism** is as follows:

94 % Olive Oil. This year some olive oil from the Holy Land has been included.

6 % Chrism.

The **Oil of Catechumens** and the **Oil of the Sick** is 100% Olive Oil

The composition of the Chrism is as follows:

**Myrrh** oil (*Commiphora myrrha*) is the primary perfume. Its long list of constituent chemical components does include *elemol*, *eugenol*, *cinnamic aldehyde*, and *dipentene* or *limonene*, but all in low proportions.

**Clove** leaf oil (*Syzygium aromaticum* / *Caryophyllus aromaticus* / *Eugenia caryophyllata*) contains *vanillin*, as do many balsams; bud oil contains high levels of *eugenol* with negative reactions in 1% skin patch tests so is never used; leaf oil does not have detectable levels of *eugenol*.

**Elemi** oil (*Canarium luzonicum*), belonging to the same family as Myrrh, contains *elemol* and *dipentene*. Patch tests at 8% produced no significant effect on humans; the balsam has 12.5% elemi oil, and the prepared Chrism has less than 1%.

**Guaiaacwood** oil or *oil of guaiac* (*Bulnesia/Gonopterodendron sarmientoi*) is a fixative also used to give soap a rose-like fragrance. Its constituent component *guaiacol* is used in the synthetic production of *eugenol* and *vanillin*. It is not considered irritating, sensitizing, or phototoxic to human skin.

**Gurjun** balsam oil (*Dipterocarpus turbinatus*), also known as **East Indian copaiba**, has not been demonstrated to be irritating, allergenic, or phototoxic to human skin. Its function in this mixture is both aromatic and fixative.

**Himalayan Cedarwood** oil is from a type of cypress (*Cupressus deodara*). Although some cypress timbers contains  $\beta$ -*Thujaplicin* which has contact allergenic properties it has never been detected in the distilled oils.

**Peru** balsam oil (*Myroxylon pereirae* / *Toluifera pereirae*) is composed of about 60% simple chemicals (*cinnamic acid*, *benzyl cinnamate*, *vanillin*, *benzyl benzoate* and *benzoic acid*) and 40% resins, it has medicinal use (e.g., in *Friar's Balsam*), and is used as a flavouring in food and drinks, and in toiletries and perfumes.

**Cinnamon** leaf oil (*Cinnamomum zeylanicum*) has similar aromatic properties to the bark oil, but it has such a low level of *cinnamic aldehyde* that it does not produce negative reactions. Bark oil **must never be used** because it contains about 90% of the characteristic *cinnamic aldehyde* or *cinnamaldehyde*, and in such a concentration it is a skin irritant even when diluted in the Chrism.