Holy oil was a constant presence in Byzantine Christianity. Referred to by various names, available from a variety of sources, holy oil was used in sacred rituals to baptize, reconcile, consecrate or bless; to anoint the sick or needy, the dying or hopeful. It was applied to bodies, houses, fields or crops; it marked special persons, spaces or objects. More than a tool for ceremony, holy oil was a basic agent of religious activity individual or collective, simple or elaborate. Sweet fragrance was a primary ingredient of its power, yet holy oil was more than its scent. Once applied, its substance penetrated deep below skin or surfaces into interiors. This essay will explore why holy oil was ubiquitous in Byzantine piety. What did holy oil do, how and why? And how were bodily sensations – smell and touch - essential to that work?