

## Chrism Mass 2018

Holy Rosary Cathedral

28 March 2018

Dear brothers in the priesthood, especially our jubilarians – thank you for your long and faithful service; brother deacons and seminarians; consecrated women and men; and dear friends in Christ our Lord:

### *Priesthood of All the Faithful*

At this Chrism Mass we are celebrating not only the ordained priesthood but also the priesthood of all the faithful, prophesied by Isaiah, as we heard in the First Reading: “You shall be called the priests of the Lord, you shall be named ministers of our God” (Is 61:6).

At Baptism each of us was anointed as a priest, prophet, and king. “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, – writes the Apostle Peter – that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Pet 2:9). Every member of the Church enjoys this exceptional dignity, and is anointed to offer sacrifices of praise in both word and deed. We have all received this “priestly” mission: to offer Christ to the world and the world to Christ.

The same Spirit poured out on the Messiah foretold by Isaiah is given to each of us, so that his prophetic words can likewise describe our lives as anointed ones, as “Christians”: to bring good news to the poor.

We do this whenever we serve the poor through our corporal and spiritual works of mercy. Likewise we are to proclaim release to captives. We do this whenever we free ourselves and others from destructive memories, bad habits, abusive pasts, and structures of sin. And we are to offer recovery of sight to the blind. This we do when we draw close to Jesus and embrace the life of the Gospel which allows us to see things as they really are: that life is God's gift and that we belong to him.

### ***Significance of the Oils***

After the homily the Oils will be blessed and the Chrism consecrated.

The olive oil used for the Sacraments has a wide range of meaning. It is nourishment; it is medicine; it beautifies and adorns; and it gives strength for battle.

Oil used in the Sacraments accompanies us throughout our Christian lives: beginning with the catechumenate at Baptism, and continuing right up to the moment when we are prepared to meet God as our Judge and Saviour in death.<sup>1</sup>

### ***Oil of Catechumens***

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, Homily, Chrism Mass (1 April 2010).

The Oil of Catechumens strengthens those about to be baptized with the power to renounce the devil and sin before they go to the font of life for rebirth.<sup>2</sup> This first anointing suggests that the person is prepared “to enter into the drama of [salvation] history as a wrestler and a winner.”<sup>3</sup>

This Oil also symbolizes the inner touch of Christ and the Holy Spirit by which the Lord draws catechumens to himself. It reminds us that not only do we seek God but that God himself is searching for us. “He comes to meet the unrest of our hearts, the unrest of our questioning and seeking, with the unrest of his own heart. . . . That journeying towards him, so as to know and love him better, must not be extinguished in us. In this sense – as Pope Benedict once remarked – we should always remain catechumens.”<sup>4</sup>

### ***Oil of the Sick***

As we know, healing is a fundamental mission entrusted by Jesus to the Church, following the example that he gave as he travelled throughout the land healing the sick (cf. Lk 9:2). The Oil of the Sick is a

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. The Roman Pontifical, *The Order of Blessing the Oil of Catechumens and of the Sick and of Consecrating the Chrism*, Introduction, 2.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Teaching and Learning the Love of God: Being a Priest Today* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2017), 35.

<sup>4</sup> Benedict XVI, Homily, Chrism Mass (21 April 2011).

visible, sacramental expression of this healing mission in our own day. It provides the sick and dying with a remedy for both their spiritual and bodily illness. It empowers them to have the strength to bear their suffering and share in Christ's redemptive mission. Through the sign of this Oil, he enters into the space of the person's suffering, fear and needs as "the true medicine of God," giving peace and assurance: "that we are safe in God's hands forever."<sup>5</sup>

### ***Chrism***

The most noble of the ecclesial Oils is Chrism, a mixture of olive oil and aromatic vegetable oils. It was the oil used for anointing priests and kings in the Old Testament. In the Church, Chrism serves chiefly for the anointing at Baptism, Confirmation and both priestly and episcopal Ordination.

### ***To My Brother Priests***

All the baptized have received the "priestly" mission of making God visible in the world. But in his Church, Jesus Christ has anointed some for a deeper, more intimate participation in his one priesthood. As the Preface proclaims: "with a brother's kindness he also chooses men to become sharers in his sacred ministry through the laying on of hands."

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<sup>5</sup>Joseph Ratzinger, *Teaching and Learning the Love of God: Being a Priest Today* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2017), 35.

My brother priests: in a very special way, tonight is our night, “the feast of priests.”<sup>6</sup> Together, as the presbyterate of the Archdiocese of Vancouver, we give thanks for the stupendous and yet unmerited gift of being drawn into the heart of Christ’s sacrificial priesthood and interiorly transformed to act in his stead, *in persona Christi*.

We do this not just individually but primarily as a body, as a communion of ordained brothers in our particular Church. A united presbyterate – such as is so evident this evening in our beautiful Cathedral – calls to mind the College of Apostles gathered in the Upper Room: first with Jesus at the Last Supper, and later receiving the Gift of the Spirit on Pentecost. The opposite of this unity would be a devilish cacophony of self-interested voices that contradict Jesus’ new commandment that we are to love one another as he has loved us (cf. Jn 15:12).

### ***Priestly Anointing for Others***

Now allow me to return briefly to say a little more about the Chrism with which our hands were anointed at Ordination.

At that moment, Christ made our hands his own. Look down at your hands. They were empowered to pass on “his divine touch,”<sup>7</sup> so

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<sup>6</sup> St. John Paul II, Letter to Priests on Holy Thursday (1986).

<sup>7</sup> Benedict XVI, Homily at the Chrism Mass (13 April 2006).

that, in his place and across the boundaries of time, we could anoint his People. He wants our hands to be instruments in his service. They are to shape the world not merely with our human creativity – as is expected of everyone – but with divine love manifested in Word and Sacrament.

“Our anointing is meant for anointing God’s holy and faithful people – Pope Francis has said – : for baptizing and confirming them, healing and sanctifying them, blessing, comforting and evangelizing them.”<sup>8</sup>

Through our anointed hands, God draws near to nurture his sons and daughters in the Eucharist and other Sacraments. Through us, Jesus Christ still speaks his Word – face-to-face and heart-to-heart – to the saintly and to the sinner. Through us, my brothers, Jesus still seeks out the lost sheep in person. In the words of our Holy Father, “We need to ‘go out’, then, in order to experience our own anointing, its power and its redemptive efficacy: to the ‘outskirts’ where there is suffering, bloodshed, blindness that longs for sight, and prisoners in thrall to many evil masters.”<sup>9</sup>

### ***Renewal of Priestly Promises***

After this homily, I shall address several questions to each of you

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<sup>8</sup> Francis, Homily, Chrism Mass (17 April 2014).

<sup>9</sup> Francis, Homily, Chrism Mass (28 March 2013).

and also to myself. Two things, above all, are asked of us in this public dialogue in which we renew our priestly promises. Above all, we promise to renew our interior bond, our configuration to Christ in our friendship with him. At the same time, we are asked to transcend ourselves, to renounce our own desires for worldly self-fulfilment. We need – I need – not to claim my life as my own, but to place it at the disposal of Another – of Jesus Christ himself. I must ask not what I stand to gain through my priesthood, but what I can give for him and so for others.<sup>10</sup>

### ***To the Whole Congregation***

Dear lay faithful: Your priests – and they are *yours* – give themselves tirelessly day after day in your service. To paraphrase the Apostle Paul: they are giving themselves to you in sacrifice; they are fighting the good fight; and they are keeping the faith, even if they not have yet finished the race (cf. 2 Tim 4:6-7). Aware that they are “unprofitable servants” (Lk 17:10) of the Lord, our priests ask nothing of you but your trust and understanding, your love and, above all, your prayers. Together let us implore Our Lady that she will accompany their ministry, so that it will bear fruit for the Kingdom and that other men will one day take their place at the altar.

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, Homily, Chrism Mass (5 April 2012).

And so, as we renew our priestly promises, I ask you to be close to your priests, lifting them up to the Lord, that they may always be shepherds after God's heart.

✠ J. Michael Miller, CSB

Archbishop of Vancouver