

Chrism Mass 2019

Holy Rosary Cathedral

17 April 2019

Dear Archbishop Arguelles, Bishop Monroe, brothers in the priesthood, especially this year's jubilarians: thank you for your long and faithful service; brother deacons and seminarians; consecrated women and men; and dear friends in Christ Jesus our Lord:

Priesthood of All the Faithful

“To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his own blood, who has made us a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen” (Rev 1:5-6).

It is our Lord Jesus Christ who loves us, who frees us from our sins by his Death and Resurrection, and who makes us a kingdom of priests to serve our God.

We can't forget that the purpose and mission of the ordained priesthood is to serve the spiritual good of the priesthood of the faithful. Through our anointing with Chrism at Baptism, we all – clerics and lay faithful alike – exercise our baptismal priesthood by participating, each according to our own vocation, in Christ's mission as priest, prophet and king.¹

The lay faithful carry out their priestly worship by offering their whole lives as “spiritual sacrifices” (1 Pet 2:5; see Rom 12:1) in union

¹ Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 1546; Benedict XVI, General Audience (2 May 2007).

with Christ in the Eucharist, as well as by acts of service (cf. Heb 13:16) and interceding for the whole world (cf. 1 Tim 2:1-2).²

The Mission of the Anointed

The first reading from the Prophet Isaiah speaks of the coming of the Messiah, the One anointed by the Lord (cf. Is 61:1). In the Gospel, we find Jesus back at his hometown synagogue in Nazareth, where he proclaims this very same reading from the Prophet and then adds that he is its fulfilment (cf. Lk 4:21).

This same anointing by the Spirit is given to all of us at Baptism and Confirmation, so that Jesus' words can likewise describe our lives as those called to share in Christ's saving mission.

Every one of us is to bring "good news to the poor" (Lk 4:18). We do this whenever we serve the poor, not only materially as we do through our good works, but also spiritually. While the materially poor are very visible to us, and not only in the Downtown Eastside, it is the spiritually impoverished who are less apparent to us. We need to tell the world about who God is and what he has done for us in Jesus' Death and Resurrection. This is what our anointing is for: to bring people the Gospel, the good news, which is not just a message but a Person who takes every person by the hand and lifts them up to himself.

² Cf. Peter S. Williamson, *Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 47.

As anointed, all of us are also tasked “to proclaim release to the captives” and “to let the oppressed go free” (Lk 4:18). So many people are captive to their negative memories, bad habits, abusive pasts, and lives of sin. No matter who they are or where they are on their journey, we are called to open their hearts to the good Lord. Because of the power we have received in our sacramental anointings, we can indeed be instruments of Jesus’ freeing others.

What else is required of us as a priestly people? To proclaim “recovery of sight to the blind” (Lk 4:18). Living in a close friendship with Jesus enables people to see things as they really are: that life is a gift from God, that they belong to him, are guided by him, and that they have a future of hope. For our part, we are each anointed “to bring to men and women the light of truth, to set them free from the lack of truth, which is the true sorrow, the true impoverishment of [the human person] man.”³

Grace to Fulfill Our Mission

The lofty mission which the Lord has entrusted to us can be carried out precisely because we have been anointed with the oils that tonight will be blessed and the Chrism that will be consecrated.

Each oil in its own way points to our participation in the life and

³ Benedict XVI, Homily, Episcopal Ordinations (5 February 2011).

mission of Jesus Christ. The Oil of Catechumens gives to those preparing for Baptism Christ's power to resist evil and temptation. This first anointing prepares us "to enter into the drama of [salvation] history as a wrestler and a winner."⁴

The Oil of the Sick brings us the healing touch of Christ. It is a visible, sacramental expression of the healing mission of Jesus in our own day.

And Sacred Chrism grants to the baptized, confirmed and ordained their specific configuration to Christ, so that they can live their vocation and mission with faith, hope and charity.

These oils are the sacramental means by which we are all united to Jesus Christ, so that his very life becomes the animating principle of our own. From this life-giving union flow all the gifts needed for the accomplishment of our calling, whatever that may be.⁵

Presbyterate of Concerned Brothers

Now I would like to turn to address my brothers in the presbyterate as their father and friend. In the mystery of his love, Christ has chosen each of us – despite our own all too evident unworthiness, weakness and

⁴ Joseph Ratzinger, *Teaching and Learning the Love of God: Being a Priest Today* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2017), 35.

⁵ Cf. Archbishop Richard Smith, Homily, Chrism Mass (26 March 2018).

sinfulness – to exercise his ministerial priesthood through us, to act in his Person.

My first words to you, therefore, are of gratitude for the priestly ministry you are carrying out with selflessness, dedication and fidelity in your parishes and various apostolates. You are on the front lines of the Church's mission of evangelization, tending to the wounds of your people and accompanying them on their journey to eternal life. You shoulder the burden and the heat of the day (cf. Mt 20:12), caught up in endless number of situations that, if it were not for your personal relationship with Jesus in prayer and your love for the Church, would inevitably wear you down.

Thanks be to God, that you have the closeness, understanding, encouragement, prayers, and love of your people. Time and again, in person and by emails and letters, the faithful express to me their profound appreciation for the gift to them of your spiritual fatherhood.

To paraphrase the Apostle Paul, writing to his younger disciple Timothy, I thank you on behalf of all the priestly people of the Archdiocese of Vancouver for pouring out your lives in sacrifice for others; for fighting the good fight; and for keeping the faith. And may you do so until you have finished the race (cf. 2 Tim 4:6-7)!

Still, within our sacramental brotherhood, we can ask ourselves: How much does the life of my brother priests affect me personally? How

much do I let myself be impacted by what they experience, grieving when they suffer and celebrating their joys? How do we – and I certainly include myself in this question – accompany and sustain our brothers, especially when they are undergoing trials, often suffering them in silence? We must allow ourselves to be vulnerable to one another.⁶ Above all, we must listen to one another, in that kind of conversation where “heart speaks unto heart.”⁷

In the past year, perhaps more than ever before in the Church’s recent history, a great shadow has fallen over the Bride of Christ, whom he loves and for whom he gave up his life (cf. Eph 5:25). The victims of clerical sexual abuse rightly deserve our most profound apologies for our failures to hear their cries and the assurance of our ongoing support in their need. This abuse has caused unbearable pain to them personally and to their families. Moreover, it has aroused justified anger in countless others, both within and without the Church, for the negligence and coverup that all too often accompanied these tragedies.

Nonetheless, “let us not be disheartened! The Lord is purifying his Bride and is converting all of us to him. . . . He is saving us from hypocrisy, from the spirituality of appearances. He is blowing his Spirit

⁶ Cf. Francis, Address to Central American Bishops, Panama (24 January 2019).

⁷ Blessed John Henry Newman, Episcopal Motto.

to restore beauty to his Bride, caught in the act of adultery.”⁸

Despite our sinfulness, it is good to recall, as Benedict XVI recently did for us:

Jesus himself compared the Church to a fishing net in which good and bad fish are ultimately separated by God himself. There is also the parable of the Church as a field on which the good grain that God himself has sown grows, but also the weeds that “an enemy” secretly sown onto it. Indeed, the weeds in God’s field, the Church, are excessively visible, and the evil fish in the net also show their strength. Nevertheless, the field is still God’s field and the net is God’s fishing net. And at all times, there are not only the weeds and the evil fish, but also the crops of God and the good fish. To proclaim both with emphasis is not a false form of apologetics, but a necessary service to the Truth.⁹

Conclusion

And so, dear brothers and sisters, as your priests renew the promises of their Ordination, pray for them and also pray that many young men will be inspired to answer the Lord’s call, so that the Word

⁸ Francis, Meeting with the Priests of the Diocese of Rome (7 March 2019).

⁹ Benedict XVI, Essay on the Church and the Sex Abuse Scandal (April 2019).

of God may always be proclaimed and the Sacraments always celebrated
in every parish in our beloved Archdiocese.

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