

HOMILY – CHRISM MASS

March 23, 2010

Because we are Christians our focus is always on Our Lord Jesus Christ. But during this holy season of Lent our focus intensifies, our hearts are more open, our ears are more attentive to him, to his teaching, to his consoling yet challenging words.

At the Mass of Chrism, with people present from the corners of the diocese, with so many priests here to renew their commitment to serve God and you his Church, our attention is on Jesus as the CHRIST, the anointed par excellence, by the Holy Spirit.

He is the one prophesied by Isaiah, the one who was to say “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, he has anointed me.” He is the one sent to save us, to bring us the wisdom of God and to assure us of his never-failing love.

But we are here to be reminded that we too are anointed. As St. Cyril of Jerusalem says, “Christ bathed in the river Jordan, imparting to its waters the fragrance of his divinity, and when he came up from them, the Holy Spirit descended upon him, like resting upon like.”

Coming up from the sacred waters of baptism, we, too, were anointed, with chrism. The same spirit that anointed Christ comes upon us, and therefore each one of us can say, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me.”

As we celebrate that we are the “anointed ones” we also celebrate that we are Christians...and this, my dear friends, is:

the greatest privilege,

the greatest honor,

the greatest title,

the greatest identity,

the greatest name by which we can be called, that is, CHRISTIANS.

According to Isaiah, the oil with which we are anointed is the OIL OF GLADNESS.

What does this mean? What characterizes us as Christians, above all, is our joy. Didn't Jesus say, "All this I tell you that my joy may be yours and your joy may be complete?" Remember St. Paul who said, "Rejoice in the Lord always! I say again. Rejoice!"

At Mass we pray as we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Before communion, we pray, "Happy are those who are called to his supper."

At the Easter Vigil, we sing to Christ symbolized by the lighted Easter candle, "Exultet, rejoice, heaven and earth!"

This oil of gladness affects us in different ways at different times.

We are not always laughing out loud.

This gladness, this joy, can express itself

sometimes with laughter,

sometimes with a smile,

sometimes with a grin, or a chuckle.

Sometimes this joy comes across as consolation or simply as serenity of the spirit.

Even in difficult times we can rejoice and be glad. Remember St. Theresa of Avila and her classic expression:

"NADA TE TURBE, NADA TE ESPANTE.

TODO SE PASA. DIOS NO SE MUDA.

LA PACIENCIA TODO LO ALCANZA.

QUIEN A DIOS TIENE, NADA LE FALTA.

¡SOLO DIOS BASTA!"

“LET NOTHING DISTURB YOU, LET NOTHING DISMAY YOU,
ALL THINGS PASS, GOD NEVER CHANGES.
PATIENCE ATTAINS ALL THAT IS STRIVED FOR.
HE WHO HAS GOD FINDS HE LACKS NOTHING.
GOD ALONE SUFFICES.”

Where does this joy, this serenity, this peace come from? It comes from trust in a God who loves us unconditionally and unreservedly.

It comes from grace.

It comes from faith.

My beloved friends, the world right now needs people who are conscious that they are anointed with the oil of gladness. The joy which we allow to show through our faces, our behavior and our way of life will go a long way to bring hope and sow the seeds of faith in an unbelieving world.

Our world suffers from violence, from divisions, from disrespect, from the questioning of legitimate authority, from plain meanness. As we fight for the unborn, for peace in the world, for immigrants and a cleaner environment, let us always do it with gladness of heart, with the joy that comes from the assurance that God loves us, that he is with us, that he will never abandon those whom he has anointed with the oil gladness.

My brother priests, this year dedicated to us, let us renew our priestly commitment and do it gladly. And may our priestly life and our ministry always be characterized by joy, peace, and serenity. The witness of our joy will be a key factor in the effective preaching of the GOOD NEWS. The joyful celebration of the sacraments will help people see that in every sacrament

Jesus the Christ is encountered. Be joyful givers, not only in this year for priests, but REJOICE
IN THE LORD ALWAYS.

And now with joy in your hearts, let us renew our priestly promises.