

This Chrism Mass is so-called because during it the Bishop, with the cooperation of the priests of the Diocese, consecrates olive oil perfumed with balsam, which is then called Holy Chrism. That a special celebration of Mass is named after it should clue us in that Chrism is significant to our life as Catholics.

It is first of all significant because being anointed with Chrism is the instrument through which we receive the Holy Spirit, for example, in the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Ordination to the Priesthood.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem explained the connection between Chrism and the Holy Spirit by associating our Baptism with the Baptism of Jesus. We are baptized in/with water as Jesus was. Immediately afterwards we are anointed with Chrism. This anointing is a sacramental re-presentation of Jesus being anointed with the Holy Spirit, descending on him like a dove, after he came out of the Jordan River.

Chrism is also significant to our sacramental life as Catholics because anointing signifies the Holy Spirit communicating the divine life of Christ to us. At this point, just as it happened after the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus at his Baptism, a voice might come from the heavens to say of us: this is my beloved son/daughter.

We are first anointed with Chrism at Baptism, when we begin to live life in Christ, becoming children of the Father, brothers and sisters of Jesus, temples of the Holy Spirit. This is the truth St. Paul wrote about in the Easter baptismal readings: you must consider yourselves dead to sin but alive for God in Christ Jesus; your life is hidden now with Christ in God.

We are anointed with Chrism a second time at Confirmation, when the Holy Spirit comes to seal our covenant with Jesus and to strengthen us to be more like Christ in bearing witness to the world. The Holy Spirit strengthens us for like-Christ-service of the glory of God and the benefit of others.

We imitate Christ when we give the gift of self, sharing our time, talent, and treasure in response to the many needs and ministries in parishes, institutions, and the diocese. No one is excluded from this responsibility, though we may be limited in the kinds of service offered, depending on our state in life, gifts, and other circumstances, like age and health.

Just as important as ministry in the parish or institution, if not more so, is the *mission* to carry out the ordinary affairs of everyday life according to the teachings of Christ and his Catholic Church. In this way Jesus is introduced into all the places and occasions that might not otherwise benefit from the light of Christ.

There is yet another anointing with Holy Chrism, when a man is ordained a Priest. This anointing radically associates the man to the life, mission, and ministry of Jesus. For this reason a priest is called “another Christ.” These are noble words to describe a noble call to walk the noble path of Jesus: a shared life of self-gift in service and sacrifice, treating others with a Spirit-inspired pity, compassion, and gentleness. True, all the baptized who are confirmed in the Spirit are called to walk that same path. But the priest serves by his word and example to instruct and form other Christians to rise to that challenge.

This is no small task and a constant challenge. For this reason, part of the Chrism Mass is devoted to inviting the priests to renew their promises and the assembly to

pray for their priests and bishop, please. The priests also receive encouragement and inspiration from the fraternity of priests in the Diocese gathered together for this celebration.

Here in the Diocese of Wichita, at the Chrism Mass we also we honor our priests who are observing special anniversaries of their ordination: 60 years, Fathers Colin Boor, Francis Cox, Reinhard Eck, Sean O'Shea, and Robert Pepe; 40 years, Fathers Robert Hemberger, Thomas Stroot, and Donald Thissen; 25 years, Father Robert Spencer.

They have persevered in their efforts to conform the reality of their lives to the ideal of being consecrated as another Christ. They have strived and are striving still to live a shared life of self-gift in service and sacrifice, treating others with the pity, compassion, and gentleness of Jesus. They have responded well to the call to continue the mission and ministry of Jesus in parishes, the Venezuela mission, care for prisoners, and the Chancery. I for one am grateful to them, edified and inspired by them.

Being anointed with Holy Chrism is significant to our life as Catholics. It is the instrument through which we receive the Holy Spirit and as a consequence receive a share in the life of Jesus the Christ, the Anointed of God. Holy Chrism is made from perfumed oil to suggest, it is said, the fragrance of Christ. We are anointed with Chrism to identify us with Christ and so that we might bear the fragrance of Jesus into the world. As St. Paul says, "We are the aroma of Christ." May it be so. Amen.