

*Chrism Mass
April 10, 2014
St. Thomas Aquinas Cathedral*

Today we continue an ancient tradition in the Church: the bishop and the priests of the diocese gather to bless the oils to be used for the sacraments of initiation, healing and holy orders. We do this in close proximity to Easter, when the newly baptized will be anointed with chrism as they receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

We do this every year and not simply as a function of blessing a supply of oils for use during the year but as an annual renewal of our ministry. The Chrism Mass maybe ancient in its origin but it is a sign of rejuvenation, as the oils are signs of the Holy Spirit's action of making things new, giving new birth in Christ, healing and refreshing the Church with new members and new ministers.

Today, the ordained priests among us renew the promises we made on the day of our ordination. For a few of us, that day was over fifty years ago (such Bishop Straling and Fr. Wolfe). A few have been ordained less than five years (such as Frs. Jesus, Tom, Doroteo, Joe Kim). Whether ordained eight years or twelve or twenty or more, it is right and good that we renew before God's People what we promised the day our hands were anointed to do Christ's work. We made a choice then, once for all, and placed ourselves at the service of the Church. But for the sake of our spiritual life, it is necessary that we renew our commitment from time to time and whenever the Holy Spirit prompts us in the face of life's challenges.

And this goes for all of us who are baptized. We grow, things change, we make mistakes, we face new challenges, perhaps an illness or death, we see life in a new way. In the flow of life, our commitment can deepen or it can become stale, without fire. It can also be filled a realistic awareness of the limits of our individual power and of how much we rely on the power of God's grace.

I think of St. Peter in the Gospels. Jesus said to him, "Follow me" not once but twice. The first was in the beginning when Jesus called together his disciples. The second time was after journeying with Jesus, after Peter betrayed Jesus, after the death on the cross and the resurrection. After all of these experiences and more, and after asking Peter three times if he loved him, Christ once again said to him, "Follow me." Those two words spoken then meant so much more than when Peter first heard them. Now he knew the cost of discipleship, now he knew the depth of Christ's love and forgiveness, now he knew what Christ's mission was all about.

From time to time, Jesus says to us, “Follow me”, not for the first time but again as an invitation to renew our discipleship with new depth, with love rekindled, and with fresh desire.

In his apostolic exhortation, *The Joy of the Gospel*, Pope Francis notes that “Sometimes we lose our enthusiasm for mission...” Our zeal, our fire, and our desire for doing Christ’s work can die down. He thinks the reason for this is “because we forget that the Gospel responds to our deepest needs, since we were created for what the Gospel offers us: friendship with Jesus and love of our brothers and sisters.” He says, “If we succeed in expressing adequately and with beauty the essential content of the Gospel, surely this message will speak to the deepest yearnings of people’s hearts...Enthusiasm for evangelization is based on this conviction.” We have a message people deeply long to hear. Have we forgotten this? Do we believe this? Do we have the desire to share this message in a way that reaches people?

We have begun the process of convoking the second Diocesan Synod of the Diocese of Reno. It will take some time and necessarily so. A good part of the synod process is listening, engaging in conversation with one another and in prayer. We have to make time for this. I am grateful for the members of the Preparatory Commission who have dedicated their time to move this process along.

The synod is an occasion for renewal, to hear once again Christ calling us—not just as individuals---but together as a local Church to follow him. It is more than a needs assessment, or pastoral planning, or priority setting, although these maybe involved. Above all else, the synod is meant to gather us together as the Church in northern Nevada, to gather in prayer, to open our hearts to the Holy Spirit, and to discern where the Holy Spirit is leading us here and now.

Today as we renew our ministry through the blessing of the sacred oils used for the sanctification of God’s People, let us pray that our diocese and the whole Church, all of us, be so renewed that we may touch the hearts of men and women with the Good News of Jesus Christ.