

Mass of Chrism
April 11, 2011
Isaiah 61:1-3a, 6a, 8b-9; Revelation 1:4-8; Luke 4:16-21

1. We gather this evening to celebrate the Chrism Mass. It is to be a sign of the unity and communion of the priests and bishop.

This celebration should foster the relationship of the bishop with the liturgical life of each parish in the diocese. One of the ways in which this is done is through the blessings of the oils and consecration of chrism. To be a sign of the unity and communion of the entire Diocesan Church there is need to have representation of the parishes of the Diocese. I am grateful to all of you who have made an effort to be here.

It is a time for brother priests to renew the commitment to their priesthood. I am deeply grateful to my brother priests for their dedicated service and for being here; it provides us with an opportunity to acknowledge and thank you.

2. While it is a special celebration for brother priests, that which really identifies priests is our celebration of Eucharist.

The Church in describing the Eucharist says: "It is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the source from which all its power flows". All the activity of the Church is directed toward the Eucharist and all the power the Church has flows from the Eucharist. In her official teaching the Church describes the Eucharist in this way: "The two parts which in a sense go to make up the Mass, i.e. the liturgy of the Word and the Eucharistic liturgy, are so closely connected with each other that they form but one single act of worship". In other words, there are two tables from which we are nourished in the liturgy – the table of the Word and the table of the Eucharist – together in our celebration form one table.

3. In order for us to understand and celebrate the Eucharist more worthily and more meaningfully, we need to take a closer look at the two tables, the table of the Word and the table of the Eucharist. We are very blessed at this time because we have two recent happenings which make it possible for us to look closely at each of these two tables: the Synod on the Word of God and the resulting apostolic exhortation, *The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church* (September 30, 2010), and the new Roman Missal which the bishops and specialists have been working on for several years and which will be implemented on the first Sunday of Advent this year.

a) **The Word of God**

"Following the example of the apostle John, and the other inspired authors, may we allow ourselves to be led by the Holy Spirit to an ever greater love of the Word of God." What we discover is that God becomes known through the dialogue which God desires to have with us. God has personal conversation with us through the Word.

- "The unseen God, from the fullness of his love, addresses men and women as his friends, and lives among them, in order to invite and receive them into God's own company".

- “In the sacred books the Father who is in heaven comes lovingly to meet his children and talks with them”.
- Christ himself “is present in his word since it is he who speaks when sacred Scripture is read in the Church”.

Where we experience this Word, where we meet Christ in Scripture, is especially in the liturgy. Pope Benedict reminds us that “the liturgy is the privileged setting in which God speaks to us in the midst of our lives; God speaks today to his people, who hear and respond”. The Word of God, constantly proclaimed in the liturgy, is always a living and effective word through the power of the Holy Spirit. It expresses the Father’s love that never fails in its effectiveness toward us. Word and Eucharist are so deeply bound together that we cannot understand one without the other. The Word of God sacramentally takes flesh in the event of the Eucharist. Jesus explained the Word to the disciples on the road to Emmaus and they recognized him fully in the breaking of the bread.

b) **The Eucharist**

We are preparing now for the reception of the new Roman Missal. In the missal we have Jesus once again explaining the Word to his disciples and breaking the bread. This revised missal has been long in its preparation and many qualified people have worked long and hard in its preparation. In many ways there will not be that much new, but the great effort that has been made helps remind us of the meaning and importance of the Mass, the table of the Eucharist.

The implementation of the revised missal, I believe, is a moment the Lord has given us to renew our celebration of Mass, to draw us more closely into the life of Christ and to build up his Body, the Church. The missal is a reminder to us as to how we offer the Immaculate Victim, Christ, to the Father; and we do this not only through the hands of the priest but together with him. Jesus says, “Do this in memory of me”. We celebrate the Eucharist in memory of Jesus. What an invitation we have!

St. Paul says, “Think of us in this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of God’s mysteries”. We are all servants of Christ: young and old, women and men, priests and religious, bishops and laity. Whom would we rather serve? We are all stewards of God’s mysteries. We are stewards of God’s Word; the Lord uses us to speak his Word to ourselves and to others. We are stewards of God’s Eucharist; we make Christ present on the altar. Christ makes himself vulnerable to us. Imagine the trust God has in us!

The Word of God has reminded us that the Spirit of the Lord is upon us and the Lord has anointed us to celebrate the Lord’s presence at the table of the Word and Eucharist. Christ has made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father. This evening we gather as a kingdom of priests, serving our God and Father. We gather as servants and stewards, celebrating that great mystery of God with us.