

Chrism Mass
March 26, 2012
Sacred Heart Cathedral

We have gathered to celebrate the Chrism Mass. It is a special celebration wherein we honor and give thanks for our brother priests. Tonight we will also celebrate the Rite of Candidacy with Rene Antonio who has been preparing for ordination to the priesthood for our diocese. And it is also a celebration wherein we bless the sacramental oils, we consecrate the chrism for our diocese and therefore this is a celebration of our diocesan family of faith.

And so I greet all of you with the words of John in the Book of Revelation: “Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come!”

As ordained priests we are reminded of our real identity and our mission in the words of the Prophet Isaiah which are repeated by Jesus in the synagogue. We are anointed, that is, made special by the Lord, set aside for a special purpose. We are being reminded of our mission to bring Good News, to make Good News present, available and inviting. We are called to bind the brokenhearted, to build God’s community, to comfort the sorrowing as agents of compassion and healing, and to proclaim the Lord’s year of favor, a Year of Faith (In a moment I will speak further about the Year of Faith the Holy Father has announced).

In the Book of Revelation it says, “To him who loves us and freed us and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father”. My sisters and brothers, we are being reminded tonight that we are made a royal people, a priestly people. These are not just fine words but a reality; we are called to imitate, to follow, to be in communion with Christ.

As we see, the Word of God places an emphasis on the inclusion of all of us. I want to reflect on a specific call given to all of us by the Holy Father. He has called the universal Church to celebrate a Year of Faith beginning on October 11, 2012 and ending the following year on the Feast of Christ the King.

We are invited to enter through the door of Faith, to set out on a journey that lasts a lifetime. This journey begins with baptism and from there our faith is increased and intensified. This Year of Faith is to help us appreciate the gift of faith, to deepen our relationship with God and to strengthen our commitment to sharing with others. Jesus said, “You are salt . . . you are the light of the world.” We cannot accept that salt becomes tasteless and light is hidden. We need to experience the need to go to the well with the Samaritan woman and to ask Jesus for a drink.

This Year of faith is an invitation, a summons, to renewed conversion in our Lord. It is a call to rediscover the content and beauty of our faith. Jesus says, “I don’t call you strangers any longer, I call you friends”. Can I say to Jesus, “Thanks for being my friend?”

It is a time for us to rediscover a taste for feeding ourselves on the Word of God. The Church reminds us:

- “In the sacred books the Father who is in heaven comes lovingly to meet his children and talks with them.”
- “By this revelation, then, the invisible God, from the fullness of his love, addresses men and women as friends and lives among them in order to invite and receive them into his own company”

We are being called to pay greater attention to the Word of God in the liturgy. The Church tells us that we are nourished at two tables, the table of the Word and the table of the Eucharist. We are also being called to spend more time in private reading the Word and reflecting on it.

The Year of Faith marks the 50th Anniversary of the Second Vatican Council. Vatican II is a high point in the teaching of the Church; if you want to know what the Church teaches, what the Church believes, the content of our faith, it is in the Vatican II documents. As priests and lay people we need to renew ourselves by reflecting on this teaching.

In this Year of Faith we will remind ourselves as to how we are sent to bring Good News:

- “The love of Christ urges us”
- “Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel”
- The of Christ urges to go through the highways of the world, to proclaim the Gospel to all peoples
- Yesterday in the gospel we heard about the Greek pilgrims when they met Philip on the way they said, “We wish to see Jesus”.

My sisters and brothers, as we really try to live this Year of Faith the words of John in the Book of Revelation will be fulfilled. “To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever”.