



**Most Rev. Robert D. Gruss  
Bishop of Rapid City**

**Chrism Mass Homily**  
Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help

March 23, 2015

Good evening everyone! How good it is for us to be here. Thank you for being here. I am deeply appreciative of your presence as we gather from across the Diocese, joining together to celebrate our oneness that comes from our union with Jesus Christ, crucified and risen. We join together to share in the riches and consolation of Christ's gift of the Holy Spirit bearing life through the sacramental ministry of the Bishop and his priests; but we also celebrate our distinctive vocations united in the one Body of Christ with Christ the Head. I want to thank all of you for your generosity and service to the Church.

In the blessing of the Oil of the Sick and the Oil of the Catechumen and in the consecration of the Sacred Chrism, our hearts and minds turn to the Lord who bestows His infinite love and mercy to us through the sacraments, especially those which make use of these oils.

Throughout history, the use of oil has always been a part of the daily life of the people. The Sacred Scriptures, in many places, gives witness to the spiritual symbolism of oil. For example, Psalm 23:5 reads, "*You anoint my head with oil,*" signifying favor and strength from the Lord; Psalm 45:8 reads, "*You love justice and hate wickedness; therefore, God your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellow kings,*" signifying the special designation from God and the joy of being His servant.

Being "the anointed" of the Lord indicates one has received a special vocation from the Lord and the empowerment with the Holy Spirit to fulfill that vocation: this is what happens at Baptism, and again in Confirmation, and again in the Sacrament of Holy Orders. It is connected to that lasting covenant expressed by Isaiah that we just heard, "*I will give them their recompense faithfully, a lasting covenant I will make with them.*" [Is 61:8b]

And we also heard Jesus echoing the words of Isaiah, "*The spirit of the Lord is upon me; therefore, He has **anointed** me.*" [Lk 4:18]

St. Paul emphasized this as well: "*God is the one who firmly establishes us along with you in Christ; it is He who anointed us and has sealed us, thereby depositing the first payment, the Spirit in our hearts.*" [2Cor 1:21]

So throughout the Sacred Scriptures, the symbolism of oil is rich – sanctification, healing, strengthening, dedication, consecration and sacrifice. These oils which will be blessed and consecrated tonight will be taken across the Diocese to be used in your parishes for the sanctification, healing and consecration of the people through the sacraments of Jesus Christ, these beautiful encounters of His love.

Tonight is a reminder that all of us, ordained and lay people alike, are sanctified and renewed through the sacramental life of the Church, Jesus Himself, and then sent forth into the world to transform the world by our lives.

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon all of us, because He has anointed us and strengthened us to carry forth the work of His Church as missionary disciples.

*“In virtue of their baptism, all members of the People of God have become missionary disciples. All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization, and it would be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelization to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients. The new evangelization calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptized. Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization; indeed, anyone who has truly experienced God’s saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love. Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are “disciples” and “missionaries”, but rather that we are always “missionary disciples”. So what are we waiting for?” [Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, #119]*

I think this is perhaps the biggest challenge for all of us – stepping clearly outside of ourselves to be those missionary disciples – to be those Spirit-filled evangelizers. But you have encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus. I know that you have. Therefore we have much to do to fulfill our duties. The Spirit of the Lord God is upon you, because He has anointed you. May God’s grace lead you in fulfilling your mission.

As you know, an important aspect to this sacred liturgy tonight is the gathering of the presbyterate of our diocese, your priests, your pastors. Though all of us gathered here share in the Lord’s mission through our common baptism, through his ordination, the ordained priest shares in it in a particular way. Let me have a few moments with them.

My dear Brothers, the Chrism Mass is always a wonderful opportunity for us to gather and celebrate the gift which the Lord has given us in our ordination, a gift never to be taken for granted, a gift never to be used for our own purposes, a gift which brings with it a great responsibility as “stewards of the mysteries of God” – both His Word and Sacrament.

I thank each of you for your constant commitment, for your dedication and for your generosity. I appreciate all you do for the People of God [all of them] in your role as priest and pastor. It is not always easy. It sometimes takes great faith and trust and courage. I don’t have to tell you that the challenges of priesthood are many, the rewards are not always evident, the fruit is not our own; but the voice of Jesus continues to encourage us, *“Remain in me, as I remain in you. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing.”* [John 15: 4,5] **Without Him, we can do nothing.**

In our role as priests, we are signs of contradiction in our world today. As I mentioned earlier, perhaps the greatest challenge for all of us is stepping clearly outside of ourselves to be those missionary disciples – to be those Spirit-filled evangelizers. This includes each of us as well – and even more so.

Like the apostles at Pentecost, each of you is sent, each day, to proclaim the newness of the Gospel with boldness, even when it meets with opposition. It is the Holy Spirit who grants you this courage, this desire, this fortitude. *“Let us call upon him today, firmly rooted in prayer, for without prayer all our activity risks being fruitless and our message empty. Jesus wants evangelizers who proclaim the Good News not with words, but above all by a life transfigured by God’s presence.”* [Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, #259]

Being an evangelizer is not a function of who we are as priests, but it is at the heart of our identity as a priest, to proclaim and preach the saving love of the Father in Christ Jesus. Even we, priests and bishop, **must step out in faith** – the Spirit of the Lord truly is upon us. Do we **deeply** believe this?

It seems to me that this is easy to preach, but much more difficult to live; much more difficult to act upon sometimes.

As Pope Francis said: *“The primary reason for evangelizing is the love of Jesus which we have received, the experience of salvation which urges us to ever greater love of him. If we do not feel an intense desire to share his love, we need to pray insistently that he will once more touch our hearts....asking him to open our cold hearts and shake up our lukewarm and superficial existence.”* [EV #264] It is through this daily intimate personal encounter with Jesus that will convince us of our true identity and what we have been given as priests.

*“The best incentive for sharing the Gospel comes from contemplating love, lingering over its pages and reading it with the heart. If we approach it in this way, its beauty will amazingly constantly excite us and we will realize ever anew that we have been entrusted with the **treasure** which makes us more human and helps us to lead a new life. **There is nothing more precious which we can give to others.**”* [EG #264]

But we know that our hearts can tire, that new difficulties are constantly surfacing. We experience failure and human weaknesses which can bring so much pain. We know that sometimes what we do doesn’t always bring the satisfaction that we seek or the results that we are looking for. Our hearts can grow tired of the struggle. And perhaps in these challenges, *“the Gospel, the most beautiful message that this world can offer, is buried under a pile of excuses.”* [EG #277]

What are the fears that hold you and me back? What are the personal obstacles that keep us from saying that deeper “yes” to what the Lord has given us in the priesthood? What are the crosses that Jesus is inviting us to embrace so that He can be with us there?

My brothers, perhaps it takes a gathering like this, a gathering of God’s people, to realize anew why you and I have been sent into the world, and Who has called us into the work of evangelization, where Christ is taken wherever we find ourselves.

It is this Diocese gathered in prayer that reaffirms for us once again that God is alive; that He deeply and truly loves us; that He is constantly intervening when necessary; that He never abandons us; and most of all, that the Holy Spirit continues to be the life breath of all we do.

We must all learn to rest in the tenderness of God’s love, while marching forward, giving Him everything, allowing Him to make our efforts bear fruit in His own time. We can never get discouraged, but must find our rest in Him.

*“Rest comes not when the schedule lightens but when [we] place things squarely in the hands of God. Peace comes not when the troubles go away but when [we] trust in the Father as Jesus did; fear dissipates not when uncertainties cease but when [we] remember that all things have been and always will be resolved in God’s love; worthiness is found not in [our] accomplishments but in God’s grace. [Our] “place” is not a place at all but being at the side of Jesus.” [Archbishop J. Peter Sartain, *Strengthen Your Brothers*, pg. 117]*

Again, thank you for all you do. What God has begun in you, may He bring to fruitful completion.