

Sermon Chrism Mass – 18th March, 2008.

I would like to start with a fictitious story.

Churchwarden A and his wife from Parish X go to a BBQ with the friends who are parishioners in Parish Y.

It is a great night. The steaks were fantastic. The ladies just raved over the salads. Then Churchwarden from Parish X said, if only our Rector as more practical. He does not do a good job when it is his turn to mow the lawn. He can't really use a nail a hammer and nail. I just don't know what they learn at theological college.

His wife chimed in and said she went to clean the Church and there he was praying. It was the middle of the day. He should have been working.

You think you have problems says lady parishioner from Parish Y. Our new lady Priest, she very nice, but, she has started this kids ministry. They have fun; yes they sing all these songs where they wave their arms around, they do craft and Mums just seem to love it as well, but they are asking why we do this, do that in Church. If they come they would know. Not only that says the male parishioner she is visiting

people who don't come to Church and we know Mrs Jones is just si ill. The Priest only calls on her twice a week, once with communion and last week she did some ironing. But we all know Mrs Jones needs more help.

Now we know this is not reality is it?

Tonight is so important for both clergy and laity fro three reasons – clergy renew their vows – we consecrate the oils and we are strengthened in receiving the Blessed Sacrament to serve our Lord.

Tonight is important because it lets us know that it God whom we both serve as clergy and lay people. For the clergy there are certain givens. As the ordinal states, and I want to say it tells us what the ordained should do, but it does not tell us how:

- Ambassador for Christ
- Proclaim the Good News
- Move people to faith and repentance
- Make the love of God known
- Strengthen the faithful
- Search out the careless and indifferent
- Lead public worship
- Administer the sacraments
- Preach the word of God

- Study the Scriptures
- Be faithful in prayer.

Tonight is important because it reminds the clergy of their central ministry and it reminds the laity how we are to work together as the body of Christ.

For those of us ordained it is important because we are renewing our ordination vows. We have been travelling through Lent and I sincerely hope and pray everyone of us have been focussing on our life and making sure we not only come to Easter to celebrate with joy but making sure we have discerned the will of God in our lives at this time.

We do this in the presence of lay people who support and uphold us in so many ways and also with whom we minister.

Tonight I will bless the Holy Oils thus the title Chrism Mass. (The word “Chrism” derives from the Greek and basically means “anoint”)

- The Holy Oils:
- Why do bishops – since the second Council at Carthage – Canon 3, and affirmed by several later Councils.

The Oil of healing – reminds the clergy and laity of the healing love of God. Often we just think of physical healing but there emotional and spiritual healing as well the healing of relationships.

St. James reminds us, “Is anyone sick among you? Let him call the elders of the Church and let them pray over him or her, and anoint him or her with oil in the Name of the Lord.”

The Oil of the Catechumenate:

This oil is important, but not used much today. I know some clergy use it for baptism, in the hopes the oil of Chrism will be used for Confirmation.

The purpose of the oil of the Catechumenate was to anoint the candidate on the First Sunday in Lent.

Explain:

- In the Early Church
- Outside the Church door
- Asked the question – What do you seek? Not what is on the Lenten book – Who – which should have been Whom – but what – the answer is new life in Christ

- Anoint the ears – to hear – the mouth to speak the word of God – the eyes to see the love of God.
- Baptism is the oil of Chrism.

The Oil of Chrism:

Three sacraments – baptism – Confirmation and Holy Orders as well as consecration of churches, altars, chalices, patens and in the solemn blessing of Church bells! We will use the oil of Chrism on the bell here later this year.

And we come to be nourished by the sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, so that we can truly serve our Lord and Master.

As the Gospel and OT reading reminds us:

- The Lord has and does anoint us
- We are to bring good news to the poor
- Release the captive and in our ministries there are people who are captive to a number of situations
- Recovery of sight to the blind and that would include the spiritually blind

And we can only do this in the power and love of Christ. We can not do it in our own strength.

Tonight is an important night for us all as we truly discern who we are as the people of god and as God has called us to be in Name and Service.