

Homily – Chrism Mass

April 16, 2019

This has been a very difficult year for all of us. Clerical sexual abuse of minors has become a global crisis. While we have made good progress in facing this matter here, especially since 2002, this has not been true everywhere. In particular, we bishops have become lightning rods in the current circumstances. The overall problem causes all of us grief, embarrassment, anger, and frustration. We are learning to be humble, acknowledging that we are the sinful People of God always in need of healing, forgiveness, renewal. We are also learning to confront the scourge of clericalism that impedes our ability to be authentic missionary disciples, faithfully proclaiming the risen Lord and his gospel.

I wish to take this occasion to thank my brother bishops, Mike Boulette and Michael Pfeiffer, for their wonderful support and help. I also remember with gratitude Bishops Tom Flanagan and John Yanta who cannot be with us today. I also thank all the members of the presbyterate and permanent diaconate gathered here for your dedicated and very generous ministry to God's people in this local church. This has been a hard year for all of us. Thank you for your fidelity, your ministry, and your prayerful support. Jesus' mission and ministry continue in our midst because of you. Today we renew our priestly commitment to bring good news to the poor, the neglected, the brokenhearted, the oppressed, and the blind.

When Jesus goes to the synagogue in Nazareth, he reads the words of an anonymous prophet and makes them his own: “to bring glad tidings to the poor, liberty to captives, and recovery of sight to the blind.” Jesus’ mission and ministry continue in our midst today because of our ministry.

At the Chrism Mass in Rome last year, Pope Francis said that the readings call us to be close to one another and to God. This goes out in concentric circles – like ripples on a pond – building on our personal encounter and closeness with God, embracing one another as brother priests and deacons, and reaching out to the poor, the sick, the prisoners, the detained, the immigrants, the refugees. Reaching out to the voiceless in the womb. The Lord Jesus, as we heard, chose to be close to his people. Closeness is a key attitude in the gospel. “In closeness to God, the Word will become flesh in [us] and [we] will become priests close to all flesh,” says the Holy Father. Our closeness, the ways we are together relating, and helping one another; the unity that comes in being together in prayer: Gives hope to the people we serve. Alone, will be very limited, together God’s grace abounds. The ways we are for others becomes a blessing for those we served; Blessed are you in doing so.

“This is what I would like to tell you. May it not be mere charity for us but that it convert our hearts. And this restlessness that the Holy Spirit gives you Priests to find ways to help, promote your brothers and sisters, this unites you to Jesus Christ: this is penitence, this is the cross, and this is joy. A great, great, great joy that the Holy Spirit gives you when you give this.” (4/30/15) – Pope Francis

He also says we can call Mary, Mother of priests, “Our Lady of Closeness. “As a true mother, she walks at our side, shares our struggles, and constantly surrounds us with God’s love, in such a way that no one feels left out.” Let us all draw near to her and her loved Son! Our Lady of Guadalupe, show us the way forward!!

I do not have much to say, my brothers, I just say I love you.