

Chrism Mass

April 7

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor.”

Every year I very much look forward to this Chrism Mass. It culminates a Clergy Day when I meet with all of the priests of the archdiocese to talk, to pray, to have dinner together followed by this Mass. How lonely it is this year! I am here with only a few people because of the restrictions on gatherings due to the coronavirus crisis. However, I assure you that we are all here together in Spirit! My brother priests, how much I wish I could greet each of you with a hug and tell you how much I love you! How grateful I am for your dedicated ministry! We are finding ways to keep connected through phone calls, texts, and emails. But I long to see you face to face!

In today’s gospel, Jesus lays out his ministry: proclaim the gospel to the poor, bring liberty to captives, recovery of sight to the blind, freedom for the oppressed. As pastors, we follow the model of the Good Shepherd. We have been anointed with the holy oils and the Holy Spirit in our baptism, confirmation, and holy orders. We have been anointed in order to anoint others: catechumens, candidates for baptism, the sick and the dying. As Pope Francis says, those whom we anoint “are the ones who complete and make real the anointing of the Spirit in ourselves. They are the ones whom we have been anointed to anoint. We have been taken from their midst, and we can fearlessly identify with [our people]. Each of them incarnates the one heart of our people.” The Holy Father also reminds us that: We anoint by distributing ourselves, distributing our vocation and our heart. When we anoint others, we ourselves are anointed anew by the faith and the affection of our people. We anoint by dirtying our hands in touching the wounds, the sins and the worries of the people. We anoint by perfuming our hands in touching their faith, their hopes, their fidelity, and the unconditional generosity of their self-giving.

My dear sisters and brothers, the Spirit of the Lord is within and among us. In this time of enforced separation, let us seek creative ways to continue to connect with others, to keep faith and hope alive, to proclaim the gospel of God’s enduring love for all people by our prayer and action. We are all in this boat together! The Lord is with us. And we pray: *Ven, Holy Spirit, Ven!*