



# **Archdiocese of San Antonio**

## **Most Reverend Gustavo García-Siller**



**Homily – Chrism Mass**

**March 22, 2016**

**At a time of great crisis for God’s people, the prophet Jeremiah lamented loudly and poignantly: “Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is there no healing?”(Jer 8:22).**

**We live in a time of great crisis -- in a world that is rapidly changing – a world of unspeakable cruelty and violence, a world of tribalism and polarization, a world of desperation and misery, a world of racism and hatred, a world plagued with new illnesses and new perils. There is a lot of darkness in our lives today.**

**While we must be careful not to demonize opponents, we also need to acknowledge that forces of evil are hard at work in our midst. They try to destroy the justice, harmony, peace, and unity that are marks of the kingdom of God. These forces may even enter into the Church, causing polarization and resistance to changes inspired by the Holy Spirit working through the hierarchy and the faithful alike. As a result, we often feel helpless, powerless, perhaps**

even hopeless. But Jesus walks with us. The Holy Spirit guides us on our way and inspires us. God the Father loves each of us endlessly and will never abandon us.

Today, at this Chrism Mass, gathered from all the parishes of this Archdiocese, we recall the words of a traditional African-American spiritual, affirming God's mercy and compassion:

There is a balm in Gilead

To make the wounded whole.

Sometimes I feel discouraged,

And think my work's in vain,

But then the Holy Spirit

Revives my soul again.

There is a balm in Gilead

To make the wounded whole.

This evening we will bless holy oils that will be used in the sacraments during the coming year. They are not magical props. They are not soothing band-aids. They are wonderful, powerful, beautiful symbols of God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit -- who is at work in our midst. God calls those who search for something more. God heals the brokenhearted. God comforts those who mourn. God forgives sinners. God consecrates us for mission and service.

With the blessed oil of catechumens we will anoint those who seek entry into our community of faith in baptism. With the blessed oil of the sick, we will comfort the elderly, the sick, and the dying. With sacred chrism we will anoint persons in Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders – setting them aside for service as missionary disciples of the risen Lord, Jesus.

When viewed in faith – seeing as God sees – we see more than laying on of hands and anointing with oil in the sacraments: we see the love of God that brings us healing and wholeness, that calls us to mission through the Church in the modern world.

Speaking to the bishops of Mexico in the cathedral in Mexico City, Pope Francis said:

When a Church congregates in a majestic Cathedral, she should not fail to see herself as a “small home” [a *casita*] in which her children can feel comfortable. We remain in God’s presence only when we are little ones, orphans and beggars. One can hear echoes in this statement of Our Lady of Guadalupe’s words to St. Juan Diego, a poor man honored with a vision of, and dialogue with, *la Morenita*. The Holy Father added:

Your efforts will not be in vain when your dioceses show care by pouring balm on the injured feet of those who walk through

**your territories, sharing with them the resources collected through the sacrifices of many; the divine Samaritan in the end will enrich the person who is not indifferent to him as lies on the side of the road.**

**The Holy Father also told the bishops that Mary's "yes" to the angel at the annunciation prompted her to give the best of herself, going forth to meet others. Pope Francis said**

**Be my ambassador, [Our Lady] she says to us, giving food to the hungry, drink to those who thirst, a refuge to those in need, clothe the naked and visit the sick. Come to the aid of those in prison, do not leave them alone, forgive whoever has offended you, console the grieving, be patient with others, and above all beseech and pray to God. And in the silence tell him what is in our heart.**

**The Holy Father is referring to the corporal and spiritual works of mercy that he wants us to emphasize in this Jubilee Year of Mercy. It is not enough to be anointed with sacred oils. It is not enough to hear the Word of God proclaimed to us. We have to allow that word to take deep root in our lives so that it will grow and bear abundant fruit. The forces of evil have already been definitively overcome by the death and resurrection of Jesus. But they are still at work, and**

**God needs us – our actions – to proclaim the good news of God’s enduring love, compassion, and mercy to all whom we encounter.**

**We are not alone. God is with us! May the Holy Spirit inspire and empower us proclaim the Lord Jesus and his gospel. May Our Lady of Guadalupe bring out the best in each of us by her example.**

**There is a balm in Gilead – to make the wounded whole!**