

Mass of the Chrism 2022

*“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord...’
‘Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.’”*

Luke 1: 1-4; 4: 14-21

*** All the Priestly people = all the Baptized**

In today’s Gospel, Jesus appears on the center stage of history to begin his sacramental public ministry of teaching and healing. God brings, in the person of Jesus, new life and vision to the sad and often tragic story of humankind. We hear these words of life proclaimed to us from the words of Saint Luke as we have barely survived the trauma of a pandemic, and now are witness to barbaric inhumane violence suffered upon our brothers and sisters in the Ukraine. But, these words of holy scripture tell us that God, even now brings in the person of Jesus, new life and vision to this latest sad and tragic story of humankind. Our hurting world asks: Is there reason to hope? Is there sense to this life? Is there a real possibility to remake our world in justice and peace? In the Messiah Jesus, God answers: There is now!

But words are often not enough. God will speak in our very own flesh, in the humanity of his Son. Jesus embodying the Word of God, will speak to our lives in his birth, in his parables, his healings, in his compassion and forgiveness, his suffering and death, and finally in his resurrection. God’s becoming human in the person of Jesus enables us to celebrate sacramentally the fullness of God’s peace, reconciliation and justice that transforms our lives and the lives of all.

Some time ago I came across a book with a fascinating title by a Swiss theologian (Hans Urs Von Balthasar, 1905-1988), *Only Love Is Believable*. It was difficult for me to even move past the title. Of course, these stunning words are in reference to the person of Jesus, and we who profess to follow him. On this day when we gather to bless the Holy Oils for the use of our sacramental ministry with Jesus, these four words, *Only Love Is Believable* sum up the meaning of the scripture proclaimed to us and the meaning of the ministry of which we share with the Lord himself, and to whom we will renew our promise of priestly fidelity.

Only Love is Believable! In the first place, only love makes Jesus believable in our busy ministerial life, and in the sacraments we celebrate with God's people, especially in these most sacred days of Holy Week when we solemnly remember not just what happened to him, but what he did. And what he did most strikingly, was he loved! Saint John tells us at the beginning of the Passion account when Jesus knew that his hour had come to pass out of this world to the Father, having love his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end." (Jn 13:1) It is Jesus' love which makes his Passion believable, that makes Jesus so attractive. It is that love which draws us, and Jesus' love for us which we celebrate in all the sacraments as we encounter the Christ who meets us in the significant moments of our lives.

It's a thrilling fact that the Church with all its brokenness and sin has been most effective and most attractive when believable love has been most evident, when the Church presents itself to the world as, like Jesus, a suffering servant, who loves.

Here my dear brothers and sisters lies the unparalleled importance as we share sacramental community. Love must get through to me, the love of him who is the Suffering Servant beyond compare. It must transform my love, so that men and women I touch resonate to my touch, because they see in my face the image of Jesus, the Jesus who loved “to the end,” to the very limit of love.

My dear brother priests and Deacons, as Pope Francis has told us: “We have been anointed to anoint. 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 people. We anoint by perfuming our hands in touching their faith, their hopes, their fidelity and the unconditional generosity of their self-giving. (Vatican Basilica, Holy Thursday, 18 April 2019) All of God’s people benefit from these oils as the nourish their lives with these ointments.

Brother Bishops, Priests and Deacons, Let’s serve these priestly people well.

May the Mother of Guadalupe strengthen our resolve as we renew the promises of our priesthood, so that like Jesus, our love may also be believable!