

Chrism Mass A.D. 2003

If the dedication of a cathedral is a once-in-many-lifetimes event, the Chrism Mass is our annual celebration by our gathered local Church of the priesthood of Jesus-the-Anointed-by-the-Spirit. His priesthood is shared by the baptized and the ordained. His priesthood is exercised in the sacraments, especially the sacraments most closely associated with the Eucharist: the sacraments of initiation and of orders, as well as the sacrament of the sick.

We the priestly people of God in the church of Los Angeles, hierarchically arranged with those who possess the fullness of the sacrament of orders—our cardinal archbishop and our regional bishops—and our priests and our deacons, are not just blessing oils and consecrating chrism but we are praying for everyone and everything they will anoint in the coming year:

- Every Catholic in our archdiocese who become sick between April 15, 2003 and next year's Chrism Mass begins to be healed by our prayer for them at the Chrism Mass and by the oil of the sick of the sick which we bless.
- Every inquirer in our archdiocese who becomes a catechumen between April 15, 2003 and next year's Chrism Mass begins to be prepared for the sacraments of initiation by our prayer for them at the Chrism Mass and by the oil of catechumens which we bless.
- Every baby in our archdiocese who is baptized between April 15, 2003 and next year's Chrism Mass begins to receive a "down-payment" on his/her confirmation at this Chrism Mass with the chrism which we consecrate.
- Every young person and adult in our archdiocese who is confirmed between April 15, 2003 and next year's Chrism Mass begins to complete her/his initiation at this Chrism Mass with the chrism which we consecrate.
- Every new priest and any new bishop in our archdiocese who is ordained between April 15, 2003 and next year's Chrism Mass begins to be ordained at this Chrism Mass with the chrism which we consecrate.
- Every new or renovated church and altar in our archdiocese which is dedicated between April 15, 2003 and next year's Chrism Mass begins to be dedicated at this Chrism Mass with the chrism which we consecrate.

The sacrament of marriage is also present in the Chrism Mass's allusions to the royal bridegroom Christ. Tonight we proclaim a portion of the marriage text of Isaiah 61:1—62:5 as our first reading. Tonight we proclaim the the approach of Christ's marriage procession in Revelation 1 as the second reading, a wedding procession completed in Revelation 19:11ff and in Revelation 21:2ff with his bride's arrival, and we use of the royal wedding psalm, Psalm 45, as the communion psalm.

So every time Cardinal Mahony invites us to pray at tonight's liturgy with the words, "Let us pray," let us enter into silent, intense prayer for ourselves, for our church, for our world, and especially for our sick, our catechumens, our infants, our confirmandi, our new priests, and our new churches and altars. And let us recommit ourselves to be a Christ-ened people.

a mystagogical meditation prepared by Dr. Paul F. Ford, professor of theology and liturgy at St. John's Seminary, Camarillo, California