

Chrism Mass
Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception
April 3, 2012

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Bishop of Springfield in Illinois

Reverend Monsignors and Fathers, Deacons and Religious, and my dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

We who call ourselves Christians bear the glorious name of Christ, in Greek *Christos*, in Hebrew *Messiah*, which means, "The Anointed." It is Jesus of whom Isaiah's prophecy speaks, and it is Jesus who fulfills that prophecy. Unrolling the scroll in the synagogue on the Sabbath as he was in the habit of doing, Jesus read the passage from the Book of the prophet Isaiah, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; therefore he has anointed me." Jesus is indeed the *Christos*, the *Messiah*, the Anointed Son of the Most High God. Isaiah then lists what the *Christos* is sent to do, among them being: "to give them the oil of gladness in place of mourning, a glorious mantle instead of a listless spirit."

As I bless the oils to be used in the sacramental rites of Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Orders and the Anointing of the Sick, I invite you to see these as "oils of gladness," reminders of the happiness that comes as a gift of joy from the freely-bestowed grace of a loving Father. This is an

important reminder in a world where we can easily succumb to the negative influences of the myriad of challenges and problems that confront us in everyday life. Among these challenges is the issue of secularism, a topic about which Pope Benedict XVI has spoken very clearly.

In his address to the Pontifical Council for Culture on March 8, 2008, the Holy Father said that secularization “is a fundamental issue for the future of humanity and of the Church. Secularization that often turns into secularism . . . harshly tries the Christian life of the faithful and Pastors alike. . . . Secularization, which presents itself in cultures by imposing a world and humanity without reference to Transcendence, is invading every aspect of daily life and developing a mentality in which God is effectively absent, wholly or partially, from human life and awareness.”

Responding to this challenge, Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Archbishop of New York and President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, addressed this topic at a meeting of the College of Cardinals with the Holy Father in the Vatican this past February. Cardinal Dolan said, “This secularization calls for a creative strategy of evangelization, and I want to detail seven planks of this strategy.” The New York archbishop recommended the following seven pointers:

1) Remembering that even those who boast of their secularism have an innate longing for the divine, the first step of evangelization must be to keep the quest for God alive.

2) "Be not afraid" - we must be confident, without being triumphalistic, since it is the power of God who sends his people to evangelize.

3) The new evangelization is not about presenting a doctrine or belief-system, but a Person, whose name is Jesus.

4) Jesus is the Truth. Hence, evangelization is linked to catechesis.

5) An evangelist must be a person of joy -- someone who smiles.

6) The new evangelization is about love -- the love of God made concrete in service.

7) Finally, martyrdom. A reminder that the Church is now peopled by those who are suffering persecution for their faith, and that these martyrs give impetus to the new evangelization.

So now, my dear brother priests, I address these words to you. As ordained priests, you exercise the sacerdotal functions of a triple office: to teach, to sanctify and to govern the Christian community. These are not three separate offices or jobs, but one only: "the functions of the ordained

minister, taken as a whole, constitute a single indivisible unity in virtue of their singular foundation in Christ” and “the diverse functions proper to ordained ministers form an indivisible unity and cannot be understood if separated, one from the other.”¹

In other words, to teach, to sanctify and to govern are merely three aspects or functions of one role. That role is to present Christ the pastor, caring for his people, the Church. The ministerial priest teaches when he sanctifies and governs, sanctifies when he teaches and governs, and governs when he teaches and sanctifies; no one function can be understood in separation from the others. This is because he takes the place of Christ the shepherd for the sake of the community. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches, the Sacrament of Holy Orders “configures the recipient to Christ by a special grace of the Holy Spirit, so that he may serve as Christ’s instrument for his Church. By ordination one is enabled to act as a representative of Christ, Head of the Church, in his triple office of priest, prophet, and king.”²

When any of these three functions is neglected or separated from their counterparts, the other two are diminished. A priest whose teaching is disconnected from the call to personal holiness and the task of shepherding

the flock runs the risk of devolving into a pedantic academic unconcerned with the salvation of souls. A priest whose sanctifying is disconnected from the wisdom of revelation and the good order of governance may personally be a kind and holy man, but would not be fulfilling his responsibilities as a pastor who leads and guides the community of faith as a representative of Christ, the Head of the Church. A priest whose governing is disconnected from sanctifying and teaching may become an effective but heartless manager whose efficiency is not imbued with the love of Christ.

The proper attitude and approach to the pastoral care of God's people is found in the passage quoted earlier from the prophet Isaiah: "to give them the oil of gladness in place of mourning, a glorious mantle instead of a listless spirit."

Therefore, on behalf of the Catholic faithful of our diocese, I ask you my brother priests to renew your commitment to the responsibilities of the priesthood which you accepted on the day of your ordination. I invite you to exercise your ministry collaborating with me in shepherding the flock of this diocese with gentle compassion, merciful justice, wise devotion, prudential courage and joyful love. As bishop of this diocese, I take this

occasion once again to express my deep gratitude for the selfless sacrifices of service that you render to the Catholic people of central Illinois day in and day out.

Among our intentions today, let us remember Pope Benedict XVI, as he soon will mark the seventh anniversary of his election as our Holy Father. May God bless his Petrine ministry. Please pray also for me as I approach the second anniversary later this month of my appointment as Bishop of the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois, that I may be a good shepherd with the help of God's grace to lead the faithful of this diocese to holiness.

As we lead our people through this holiest week of the year, I pray that all the Christian faithful, through our priestly ministry, will grow deeper in faith, hope and love with the assistance of our Blessed Mother, the Immaculate Conception, Patroness of our diocese.

May God give us this grace. Amen.

¹ *Interdicasterial Instruction on certain questions regarding the collaboration of the non-ordained faithful in the sacred ministry of priest*, promulgated by the Holy See August 15, 1997, #2.

² *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #1581.