

CHRISM: OIL OF GLADNESS

On Holy Thursday morning, Archbishop Perez gathered with his priests and deacons in the Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul for what is known as the Chrism Mass. At that Mass all the olive oil is blessed for the entire year. This olive oil is then distributed to each parish for use in its own sacramental celebrations. There are three big urns of olive oil to be blessed.

The Oil of Catechumens is used to anoint the area over the heart of the catechumen so designating them as a suitable candidate to receive the sacrament of Baptism and make the gift of their own heart to Christ even as they are baptized into Him. It is used in Baptism.

The Oil of the Sick is used in the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick to bring spiritual, physical and personal healing to those anointed with this oil.

The Oil of Chrism is used in the Sacraments which may be received only once—Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Orders. Chrism is Olive Oil that has had a balsamic aromatic oil added to it to impart a delightful fragrance. In the Ritual of Blessings it says:

Before saying the Prayer of Consecration, "the Bishop breathes upon the opening of the vessel of the Chrism." Chrism is a sign of the Holy Spirit, and this action by the Bishop recalls the Spirit of God "moving over the face of the waters" at creation and Jesus' resurrection appearance to the disciples in which "he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'". The Bishop then invites the people to pray in silence before he consecrates the Chrism.

Please listen to the prayer. Everyone in this Church has been anointed with the Oil of Chrism. Listen so as to understand what has happened to you and poured out upon you.

O God, author of all growth and spiritual progress, receive in your goodness the grateful homage that the Church joyfully offers to you through our voice. For in the beginning you commanded the earth to bring forth fruit bearing trees, among which olive trees would arise as providers of this most rich oil, so that their fruit might serve for sacred Chrism. In the spirit of prophecy, King David foresaw the sacraments of your grace and sang of the oil that would gladden our faces. In the last days all this has been clearly revealed: when offense is removed through the waters of Baptism, the anointing with this oil causes our faces to be joyful and serene.

Still greater dignity was added to this when your Son Jesus Christ, our Lord, insisted that he be washed by John in the waters of the Jordan. You sent the Holy Spirit from on high in the likeness of a dove; you declared by the witness of the voice that followed, that you were well pleased with him, your Only Begotten Son.

Therefore we beseech you, Lord: be pleased to sanctify with your blessing this oil in its richness, and to pour into it the strength of the Holy Spirit, with the powerful working of your Christ. From his holy name it has received the name of Chrism...as a sacred sign of perfect salvation and life for those to be made new in the spiritual waters of Baptism. May those be formed into a temple of your majesty by the holiness infused through this anointing. May those anointed ... be clothed with the garment of an incorruptible gift. May

this oil be the Chrism of salvation for those born again of water and the Holy Spirit, and may this chrism make them partakers of eternal life and sharers of heavenly glory.

My friends, that is a most beautiful prayer of consecration. That olive oil is consecrated with the very Spirit of the Living God. Chrism is for the bestowing and the imparting of the Holy Spirit to us. Now, listen to John's account of that Easter evening behind the locked doors of the Upper Room. Jesus enters. They are all very demoralized, exhausted and confused. He greets them with his gift of peace, Shalom. They do not know what to make of him. And then he greets them again. But the second time John says that Jesus breathes on them. Just stay with that thought a moment. We all breathe. We must breathe. Or we die. But Jesus breathes on them. His breath is a gift he is bestowing upon them. His own Spirit He breathes into them. So that his Spirit will now live in them. And change their hearts. Transform their hearts. Restore order to their lives and give them a real peace after the devastating events of the days before. And to restore joy to their faces and that it show in their countenance—and in ours. His breath anoints.

My friends, the joy of Christ does truly abide in our hearts. But we struggle in life with the spiritual combat that still goes on. And the joy that is within us, we have to find a way to allow it to be seen, to show on our faces.

Today at this Mass, in just a few moments a woman named Wendy, married to one of our parishioners, will make her profession of faith as a Catholic even though she was baptized in another Christian denomination. She will then be anointed with the Chrism of salvation. The breath of Christ breathed out on that first Easter and continued down through the centuries to the breathing of Archbishop Perez over this very oil, will now come to her. It will situate her within the bosom of this community of believers just like in the early Church. She will be graced with a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit. And she will receive a new additional name. And I will bless her with peace.

And then, she will turn toward all those present and we will applaud her decision and the outpouring of the grace of God. And then? Then you will look upon her face and behold her joy and be reminded of just how real is our God, our faith and our sacraments. Let us rejoice and give thanks to God for the faith that animates us this day. May it spread everywhere and may we be its witnesses in our day. Let us resolve that its joy will show in our faces.

May the Lord bless us today and give us his peace.