

Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, J.C.D.  
Chrism Mass  
March 24, 2015



"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "the one who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty." So ends the passage from the Book of Revelation read every year at this important celebration. Christ Jesus is at the center of our existence. It is He who convokes us this evening to celebrate the mysteries of our salvation. He has called each one of us with love beyond all telling and given us a role in the salvation of humanity.

Tonight we celebrate the joy of priesthood coupled with the abundance of blessings in the sacraments, and the ever-present desire to increase the number of workers for the harvest.

Last year Pope Francis stressed the nature of our imperishable joy in the priesthood. "The fullness of the Gift, which no one can take away or increase, is an unfailing source of joy: an imperishable joy which the Lord has promised no one can take from us (*Jn 16:22*). It can lie dormant, or be clogged by sin or by life's troubles, yet deep down it remains intact, like the embers of a burnt log beneath the ashes, and it can always be renewed. Paul's exhortation to Timothy remains ever timely: I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands (cf. *2 Tim 1:6*)."<sup>1</sup>

Meditating and rejoicing in the joy we have received allows us to experience the power of both Isaiah and the Lord Jesus who experienced the "Spirit of the Lord God" upon themselves. That is a reason to rejoice and to examine how responsibly we have used the gifts of our ordination. Today we celebrate the privilege of bringing the message of salvation to the women and men of our day. We know that we must find ways to insert that message in the midst of an ever more oppressive secularism that fills the society where we must preach.

Today we renew the promises of our ordination in the context of the perfect prayer. We give thanks for our vocation and this perpetual ministry in the Church. We

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis, Homily at the Chrism Mass, 17.IV.14.

are inserted in that long line of priests who assure that the sacraments are administered to the faithful and that Christ's promise to be with His Church to the end of time is indeed fulfilled. We cannot master the task without His help. It is His Church and we are the people He has called.

Again Pope Francis offers us food for thought: "It is the living Church, with a first name and a last name, which the priest shepherds in his parish or in the mission entrusted to him. That mission brings him joy whenever he is faithful to it, whenever he does all that he has to do and lets go of everything that he has to let go of, as long as he stands firm amid the flock which the Lord has entrusted to him: Feed my sheep (cf. *Jn 21:16,17*)."<sup>2</sup>

This evening we invoke the Spirit once again over the oils to be used in the celebration of the sacraments throughout the coming year. The symbolism is rich. The oil is pressed out from the crushed olives, a fruit which very old trees continue to produce. It reminds us of the perpetual newness of divine life, even when it flows forth from ancient rites and in accord with centuries of tradition. The pressing also aptly describes the condition of ministry in the Archdiocese: a reduced number of priests striving to serve the same or an increased number of faithful. It describes well the ministry of my faithful Auxiliaries and mine: ruled by airline timetables, distances, and commitments across the globe.<sup>3</sup>

Think about the celebration of the sacraments even by a very old priest who can still change bread and wine into the Body and Blood of the Lord and nourish a community, can still forgive sins and anoint the sick. The image of our late Archbishop Dimino comes to mind. To his last breath a priest as his annotated breviaries attest.

The image of oil is rich, however, because it flows, penetrates, and is difficult to clean. So also is divine grace. It flows from the sacraments. It molds and changes the hearts of those who meet Christ in them. Here we see the innocent face of a baby at baptism or the eagerness of a catechumen about to be anointed in the scrutinies or the earnest and questioning expression of an adolescent before confirmation. We can also see the wounded man or woman on the roadside in a foreign land or at the infirmary as he or she awaits medical evacuation to Landstuhl. Let us also look to the hands of our co-sponsored and see there the abundance of divine grace and favor. All are here spiritually this evening and we invoke a blessing upon this oil which will be used in ministry to them!

Then we are able to hand on what we ourselves have received. We generate life in the Spirit. We allow the olive press to squeeze out the remaining, invigorating drops of oil to glisten and gladden. Thus the relationship with God is kept strong and we, too, with the Psalmist will sing the goodness of the Lord forever.

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Timothy Broglio, homily at the Chrism Mass, 23.III.2010 .

At this most significant and unique liturgy let us also renew our plea to the Master of the harvest to send workers into the fields. The harvest is rich, the needs are many. Help all of those whom the Lord is calling to heed His voice and respond with the generosity of the Blessed Virgin Mary's fiat, celebrated in tomorrow's Solemnity.

At this Chrism Mass, "I ask the Lord Jesus to enable many young people to discover that burning zeal which joy kindles in our hearts as soon as we have the stroke of boldness needed to respond willingly to His call."<sup>4</sup>

To all the baptized here present, I exhort you to live the fullness of your faith so that the fragrance of the Gospel in your hearts might permeate our desperate world. It is possible to make a difference.

Joy, boldness, response are all virtues that Mary exemplifies in her words to the angel Gabriel. Prepared by divine grace, she simply complied with the divine charge. Each of us has been endowed by Almighty God with gifts and talents to be used in building up the Body of Christ. Today we are reminded again that the Spirit of God is upon us and we are invited to act on His indwelling to build up the Church, His Body.

He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and end of all. We are on pilgrimage to dwell with Him for eternity. We have only to put Him at the center of our lives and follow His lead.

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<sup>4</sup> Pope Francis, *ibid.*