

Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, J.C.D.
Chrism Mass 2024
18 March 2024



Dear Brothers in the Episcopate and Priesthood,
Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

When the first changes began to be introduced into the celebration of the Eucharist in November 1964, the pastor of my home parish at 88 years of age began to celebrate Mass without changes in the chapel off the sacristy. Generally, a boy in the high school seminary served the Mass, but he was not always available and I would substitute. The piety, the care, and the physical effort made by the priest, Father John Mary Powers, deeply impressed this 13 then 14 year old. The first stirrings of the desire to follow in his footsteps began.

Twenty three years ago that parish gave me Father Power's chalice, a good reminder, especially in these years of Eucharistic Revival, of our primary function as priests, to offer Sacrifice.

Tonight we gather in representation of the presbyterate of this global archdiocese to renew our commitment along with the oils to be blessed and consecrated. We hear about beginnings, completion, and service.

Each one of us can relate to the Prophet Isaiah as he reflects on the anointing by the Spirit. In His first discourse in Nazareth, the Lord Jesus reflected on the same passage. We experienced the grace of ordination and the enthusiasm that comes with new beginnings. Who cannot remember that first request for a priest, when, instead of looking for one, you realized that you were there for the seeker?

In his homily for this Mass last year, Pope Francis spoke about beginnings and challenges. “We too experienced an initial anointing, which began with a loving call that captivated our hearts and set us out on the journey; the power of the Holy Spirit descended upon our genuine enthusiasm and consecrated us. Later, in God’s good time, each of us experienced a Passover, representing the moment of truth. A time of crisis which took various forms. Sooner or later, we all experience disappointment, frustration and our own weakness; our ideals seem to recede in the face of reality, a certain force of habit takes over, and difficulties that once seemed unimaginable appear to challenge our fidelity.”¹

Then we return to the beginning and try to rekindle that initial enthusiasm and renew our fervor. We find solace in the Lord’s words “my yoke is sweet and my burden light”. Karl Rahner wrote that said expression “holds good of the onus presbyterii too, so that the crushing burden of the cross of Your priesthood may become for me God’s blessed burden.”²

We recognize that as a Church on this night when we gather in prayer to renew the oils that will be used throughout the world to anoint the sick, strengthen the unbaptized against the devil, and consecrate babies, youth, priests, bishops, altars, and more. We renew the promises of ordination to obey, to be more united with Jesus Christ, and to be faithful stewards of His mysteries. We recognize that we cannot accomplish the task entrusted to us by ourselves. We depend on divine assistance, the support of the community of faith, and an assiduous attention to our spiritual life.

We are not blind to the challenges or unaware of what is being asked. We are privileged to be welcomed in the most difficult moments and the most sublime occasions, because we come in persona Christi. Tonight we want to be renewed so that we can bring to completion what Almighty God has begun in us.

The passage from the Book of Revelation speaks to us about completion. He is the alpha and the omega and combines the whole of salvation in His person. His call brought us to the priesthood and we pray to fulfill His commands. With the lay faithful we strive to bring His saving mission to our brothers and sisters. That is the missionary mandate clearly issued by the Lord Jesus at His Ascension.

Our prayer, then, is to shake off lethargy, reject mediocrity or just getting by, and allowing the routine events of our life to be extraordinary, because they are graced by Almighty God. That desire for completion or fulfillment means that we also resist the temptations identified by Pope Francis in his homily last year. That of “compromise, where we are content just to do what has to be done; the temptation of surrogates, where to find satisfaction we look not to our anointing, but elsewhere; and the temptation of discouragement – which is very common – where dissatisfaction leads to inertia.”³

¹ Pope Francis, Homily at the Chrism Mass, 6.IV.23.

² Karl Rahner, *Prayers for a Lifetime*, p. 116.

³ Pope Francis, *op. cit.*

We turn to prayer, recollection, and inwardness. We beg for one more gift: “the grace to pray truly and to become daily more.”⁴

Then we will be effective servants of Word and Sacrament. I never tire of reminding the Armed Forces and the Department of Veterans Affairs that bishops and religious superiors release priests so that they can bring the sacraments to those who seek them. You do not need ordination to be a social worker, a counselor, a drill instructor, a promotor of morale—all good services to render, but not dependent on ordination. The uniqueness of your role is what brings our beloved faithful here this evening. They know what you bring and it is what they crave.

St. John Paul II wrote to us about the priest as “steward and witness” in his first letter to priests on Holy Thursday, 1979. Among other thoughts, he encouraged us: “Our pastoral activity demands that we should be close to people and all their problems, whether these problems be personal, family or social ones, but it also demands that we should be close to all these problems “in a priestly way”.”..Therefore if we are really of assistance in those human problems, and they are sometimes very difficult ones, then we keep our identity and are really faithful to our vocation. With great perspicacity we must seek, together with all men, truth and justice, the true and definitive dimension of which we can only find in the Gospel, or rather in Christ himself. Our task is to serve *truth and justice* in the dimensions of human “temporality” but *always in a perspective* that is the perspective of *eternal salvation*. Our brethren in the faith, and unbelievers too, expect us always to be able to show them this perspective, to become real witnesses to it, to be dispensers of grace, to be servants of the word of God. They expect us to be men of prayer.”⁵

Father Powers certainly knew that and dedicated his life to extraordinary priestly ministry as it was envisioned in the decades that followed his ordination in 1902. I give thanks for his example as I give thanks for the priceless ministry of all those who serve the faithful entrusted to my pastoral care in this “local” Church where the sun is ever risen.

⁴ Rahner, *op.cit.*, p. 126.

⁵ St. John Paul II, *Letter to Priests*, 9.IV.79.