

**Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, J.C.D.**

Chrism Mass 2022

5 April 2022



A week ago during a pastoral visit to Joint Base Charleston, I was privileged to celebrate the Christian initiation of two “guests” in the consolidated Brig on that installation. It was deeply moving to offer them the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and Holy Eucharist after they had been prepared by their catechists. They are there for mistakes made, but now they have been offered the liberation that comes from knowing Christ, being reborn into His eternal life, and being filled with His Spirit.

The privilege of being that instrument of transmitting the saving graces and aware that we are filled with the Spirit as we heard in the Gospel bring us here this evening to celebrate priesthood, bless and consecrate the oils for use throughout the world in this archdiocese, and recommit ourselves to the priesthood of Jesus Christ. We do so shortly after the Bishop of Rome consecrated Russia and Ukraine to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, always our Mother and invited the whole Church to join him.

The visit to the brig was a good reminder of our duty to shepherd all people, regardless of their success or failure. It was a concrete sign of the field hospital description of our community of believers. The importance of bringing Christ into the midst of that small Catholic group cannot be exaggerated. I am pleased that Father Garcia makes that a weekly visit amid his other pastoral duties on base.

In a few minutes we will renew the promises made at our ordination in part to rekindle that commitment and in part to remember that we are always and everywhere servants of Christ crucified and ministers of His new life for those entrusted to us. We never forget the commitment we have made in love for our Savior to lead our sisters and brothers to the fullness of life.

Fundamental to our task is evangelization, announcing the Kingdom of God and drawing all people to the fullness of life. The task is not easy and the numbers can be daunting. We must draw on the Spirit and the enthusiasm of our ordination days. We cannot rest until the message of eternal life has been announced to all men and women.

In a letter to priests for Holy Thursday some years ago, St. John Paul II wrote: “On the solemn occasion of Holy Thursday, together with all of you, dear Brothers, I renew, as does every Bishop in his own Church—with the deepest humility and gratitude the awareness of the reality of the Gift, which through presbyteral ordination has become our part—part of each one and of all—in the priesthood of the universal Church (cfr. Ps. 16:5)

“The sentiment of humble gratitude must from year to year prepare us ever more for the multiplication of that talent which the Lord generously extended to us on the day of His passing, so that we can present ourselves before Him on the day of His second coming, we to whom He said: ‘I do not call you servants any longer...but I call you friends... You did not choose me, but I chose you and established you so that you might go and bear fruit and your fruit will last.’ (Jn 15:15s)”<sup>1</sup>

The Council reminds us that the priesthood “derives its power and force from the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ (PO 2)”, which is made possible by the fiat of the Blessed Virgin Mary. She is an excellent model for our ministry and is never far from those who call out to her. Her ‘yes’ was an authentic gift of self which enabled the Word of God to become flesh in her womb. “In an analogous way, when priests say ‘yes’ to their vocation, they also make a sincere gift of themselves to God. Their ‘yes’ to God’s call in the priesthood likewise enables the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Christ to be made present at every Mass, as well as, the Sacrifice on Calvary.”<sup>2</sup>

We try to imitate Mary’s docility to the Will of God as did Jesus in fulfilling the Father’s desire in offering the salvation of the world. We pray that our example might also strengthen the people we are privileged to serve. We take them to the Lord in our prayer and we recognize that any sacrifice we make in ministry to them is ultimately a participation in the suffering of Christ and a contribution to His saving presence in the Church for all times.

In the tribulations that might be ours we find solace in the company of Mary at the foot of the Cross and we strive to appreciate the wider picture beyond my vision, limitations, and wants. My thoughts turn to the 89 year old pastor of my home parish who continued to celebrate daily Mass for us, albeit in the chapel, but supporting the parish with his offering of the perfect sacrifice. Only a server was present, but that unique sacrifice was offered for all.

We need this moment of recommitment to affirm together our desire to be alter Christus in the service of our people. In a time of uncertainty and war we offer the assurance of our accompaniment and our readiness to assure ministry even in danger.

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<sup>1</sup> St. John Paul II, Letter to Priests on Holy Thursday (1985), 2.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Fastiggi, “Be It Done to Me According to Thy Word,” *The Priest* (March, 22) pp.23-4.

We also pray for world peace and for understanding coupled with the cessation of hostilities in Ukraine. The unjust aggression there, the harm done to the innocent, and the brutality must not continue. May the Prince of Peace, capable of moving hearts, open the hearts of all to His presence and lead them to the fulfillment of His will.

Emerging from the constraints of so many months of pandemic restrictions, we invite the people entrusted to our care to rediscover the Body and Blood of Christ, source of our healing and hope, the theme of the triennial strategic plan of the US Bishops' Conference coupled with this time of Eucharistic revival. That will require our ingenuity, our ability to invite, and our enthusiasm.

The oils to be used for the sacraments of initiation, the infirm, and ordination remind us also of our commitment to the People of God. Our faith is lived and communicated in sacramental encounters. The matter of the sacraments that is blessed and consecrated today reminds us, if there be need, of our commitment to service and to pouring the oil of gladness upon those who call upon us.

Just three years ago we were joined by a few bishops and faithful from Venezuela at our Chrism Mass. It was a good reminder of the universality of the Church and our mission. Of course, serving in an archdiocese over which the sun is always rising keeps us attentive to the needs of all and preserves us from too much provincialism. Last Tuesday the station for the Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA, was the brig in Charleston, SC and today it is this splendid crypt church of Mary's House. What might be odd in a territorial archdiocese is simply ordinary administration for us and, renewing our commitment, we give thanks.