

Chrism Mass 2022 Homily
Most Reverend John O. Barres
Diocese of Rockville Centre
St. Agnes Cathedral
Tuesday, April 12, 2022

I. Introduction

This afternoon, in the midst of Holy Week, we gather for our Chrism Mass 2022. This annual celebration of the Eucharist at our Cathedral manifests the communion we have as the Church of Rockville Centre, and it is good that we are here!

II. Gratitude

At this Chrism Mass, when the gift of priesthood is celebrated, let me begin by thanking our priests.

Brothers, we have an exceptional presbyterate. You are an inspiration to each other in the solidarity, humility, and magnanimity of your fraternity.

You are an inspiration to our people as you continue to model courage, charity, self-possession, holiness and mission during these times of tragedy, trauma, war and international upheaval.

Brothers, you are an inspiration to me and to all you serve!

I express gratitude today for the ministry of our auxiliary Bishops, who serve and who selflessly give themselves to the Church on Long Island.

I thank, too, our dedicated deacons who live their *diakonia* in our parishes and in various apostolates.

Allow me to voice our collective thanks for Bishop Murphy and our retired Bishops, priests, and deacons. Brothers, thank you for your *faithful witness*. We are blessed to be beneficiaries of your continued ministry, your precious and hard-earned wisdom, and your fervent prayer.

At every Mass we remember those who have gone before us, and at this Chrism Mass, we pray for the souls of our deceased bishops, priests, deacons and their families. May God grant them light and peace.

The Chrism Mass is a time to pray for Pope Francis and be in solidarity with his spirit of global mission and universal fraternity.

The past year we experienced the Lord's closeness in many ways and especially in the ordinations celebrated at St. Agnes. They were moments when *the oil of gladness* was poured upon us.

We give thanks for the June 19, 2021 Priesthood Ordination of Fr. Joseph Catafago, Fr. Michael Lombardi, and Fr. Dominik Wegiel.

And we give thanks for the May 22, 2021 Ordination of Permanent Deacons Sean Cotter, Nilo Deleon, Thomas Depalo, Thomas Elliott, Paul Vastola, and Matthew Yellico.

As well, we anticipate the upcoming June 18, 2022 Ordination to the Priesthood of Deacons Louis Cona, Christopher Heller and Stephen Rooney.

Brothers, our prayers are with you as you prepare for ordination.

Recalling the newly ordained and those to-be-ordained, we think too of our jubilarians who celebrate milestones. We give thanks to God for our priest jubilarians and the graces experienced in their faithful living of the priesthood, and we are grateful for our deacons who mark milestones in their service to the People of God.

We also express our prayers and best wishes to Fr. Jose Luis Tenas and Fr. Johnny Mendonca who are now officially incardinated in the Diocese of Rockville Centre.

At this Chrism Mass, and along with our transitional deacons and seminarians who are present today, we pray as a presbyterate for a rich harvest of vocations, most

especially to the priesthood, as we recommit to casting our nets in every parish, every Catholic and public school, and in every university on Long Island. May the Lord send laborers into His harvest!

III. The Catholic Priest and the Parable of the Good Samaritan

Pope Francis and Pope Benedict on the Good Samaritan

Pope Francis and Pope Benedict have both given compelling commentaries on the Parable of the Good Samaritan. Their commentaries express powerfully the theology and spirituality of the Chrism Mass as well as the theology and spirituality of our *Synod on Synodality* and our *Eucharistic Revival*.

Pope Francis does an extended analysis of the parable in chapter two of *Fratelli Tutti*. Pope Benedict gives his analysis in chapter seven of *Jesus of Nazareth* (volume one).

In *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis reminds us that “The story of the Good Samaritan is constantly being repeated” (71) and that “each day we have to decide whether to be Good Samaritans or indifferent bystanders.” (69)

Like the Fathers of the Church, Pope Benedict gives a Christological interpretation of the parable. He writes: “If the assault victim is the image of Everyman, the Samaritan can only be the image of Jesus Christ. God himself, who for us is foreign and distant, has set out to take care of his wounded creature. God, though so remote from us, has made himself our neighbor in Jesus Christ. He pours oil and wine into our wounds, a gesture seen as an image of the healing gift of the sacraments, and he brings us to the inn, the Church, in which he arranges our care and also pays a deposit for the cost of that care.”¹

We have been “anointed to anoint”

As I bless the Oil of the Sick and Oil of Catechumens and as I consecrate the Chrism, we recall that Pope Francis says that we Catholic priests “have been anointed to anoint.”²

¹ Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth (Volume 1)*, (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 200-201.

² Pope Francis’ 2019 Chrism Mass homily.

In our commitment to holiness and mission, in our kenotic configuration to the Cross, in our attentive ministering to the wounded on the side of the road, we are Good Samaritan Catholic priests committed to Word and Sacrament. We are committed to these oils. Our priestly ministry and ontological identities are an expression of the Holy Spirit working through these oils.

Pope Francis says: “We anoint by distributing ourselves, distributing our vocation and our heart. When we anoint others, we ourselves are anointed anew by the faith and affection of our people.”³

The Spirit of Jesus Christ – the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End of all things -- is upon us because He has anointed us and sent us to bring glad tidings to the lowly, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, release to the prisoners and comfort to all who mourn.

As Catholic priests, forever we will sing the goodness of the Lord.

In our Christocentric pastoral and evangelizing mission, we hear and experience constantly in our ministry to the people we lay down our lives for the echo of our Lord’s words: “Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.”

How often we hear in our priestly ministry that the Parable of the Good Samaritan is fulfilled in our hearing and in the hearing of the people we serve.

As Pope Francis says, “We anoint by dirtying our hands in touching the wounds, the sins and the worries of the people. We anoint by perfuming our hands in touching their faith, their hopes, their fidelity and the unconditional generosity of their self-giving...”⁴

Our Good Samaritan Solidarity with the Priests of Ukraine and Poland

Today, we express our solidarity and support to our brother bishops and priests in Ukraine and Poland who are ministering to refugees and to people who are suffering

³ Pope Francis’ 2019 Chrism Mass homily.

⁴ Pope Francis’ 2019 Chrism Mass homily.

the tragic injustices and loss of life in this war. Their lives and the lives of the people they serve are a living commentary on the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

We expressed our solidarity with them on March 25th when we prayed with them these words from the *Act of Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary*: “Mother of God and our Mother, in your Immaculate Heart, we solemnly entrust and consecrate ourselves, the Church and all humanity, especially Russia and Ukraine. Accept this act that we carry out with confidence and love. Grant that war may end and peace spread throughout the world. The ‘Fiat’ that arose from your heart opened the doors of history to the Prince of Peace. We trust that, through your heart, peace will dawn once more. To you we consecrate the future of the whole human family, the needs and expectations of every people, the anxieties and hopes of the world.”

Our Holy Father, our Bishops and priests from all around the world, prayed together this *Act of Consecration*. What a powerful expression of the biblical and ritual texts we pray at this Chrism Mass today. What a powerful expression of God’s providential design for the Sacrament of Holy Orders in world history.

Drawing Inspiration, Holiness and Courage from the Good Samaritan Catholic Bishops and Priests in History

And so today, we think of the great Good Samaritan Catholic priests who were ambassadors of the Light of Christ in moments of worldly darkness.

We think today of St. Irenaeus (130-202), proclaimed a Doctor of the Church by Pope Francis on January 21, 2022. Mentored and inspired by St. John the Evangelist and connected to St. John in Apostolic Succession, St. Irenaeus is the first Doctor of the Church believed to have been a martyr.

He died around the year 202 and now holds the distinction of being the most ancient of the Church’s now 37 Doctors of the Church. As one of the Church’s earliest systematic theologians, he was a Good Samaritan priest and bishop. He defended the Church against Gnostic heresies and was an instrument in helping the Church in history to understand more deeply the liberating truth of the doctrine of Apostolic Succession.⁵

⁵ Cf. Michael R. Heinlein, “The Life and Legacy of St. Irenaeus, *Doctor of the Church*,” in *Our Sunday Visitor*, February 13-19, 2022, 9-12.

With the great Good Samaritan bishops and priests of history who witnessed to the unity of charity, mercy and truth, we remember today that an authentic spirit of priestly pastoral charity, mercy, forgiveness and lived Catholic Social Justice teaching cannot be built on the House of Moral Relativism.

A false and illusory sense of mercy that would distort Catholic Anthropology and Marriage, relativize the Gospel of Human Life, turn a blind eye to racism and to the needs of the poor and the refugee is corrosive and destructive to the common good.

No one is more eloquent on this point than Pope Francis in his September 2015 *Address to the United Nations* and in his encyclicals *Laudato 'Si* (2015) and *Fratelli Tutti* (2020).

In his March 20, 2022 *Angelus*, Pope Francis described the horrific moral relativism involved in the ongoing tragedy in Ukraine. He said: “So many grandparents, sick and poor people separated from their own families, so many children and fragile people are left to die under the bombs without being able to receive help and find safety even in the air raid shelters. All this is inhuman! Indeed, it is also sacrilegious because it goes against the sacredness of human life, especially against defenseless human life, which must be respected and protected, not eliminated...”⁶

True Gospel mercy and compassion and the true pastoral charity of the Catholic priest are built on the House of a transparent assent to the Ten Commandments and the liberating truths of Catholic moral teaching that promote authentic and prophetic peace and justice in world history.

The Catholic priest knows that he cannot compromise Catholic truth in his pastoral ministry because he knows that Catholic truth is an expression of Christ’s Divine Mercy and the compassion of God.

We think of so many courageous Good Samaritan bishops and priests in history who inspire us at this Chrism Mass.

In this *Year of St. Ignatius*, we think of St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), the founder of the Society of Jesus. Today at this Chrism Mass we thank our Jesuit

⁶ Pope Francis, *Angelus*, March 20, 2022.

brothers from St. Anthony's parish in Oceanside and we pray together that St. Ignatius may be proclaimed a Doctor of the Church.

On March 12th, we celebrated the 400th Anniversary of St. Ignatius' Canonization. He was canonized with St. Francis Xavier (1506-1552), his Jesuit priest son who forged missionary trails to India, Japan, Borneo and the Maluku Islands.

St. Ignatius was also canonized with his good friend St. Philip Neri (1515-1595), known as "the Apostle of Rome" and "the Reformer of the Eternal City." St. Ignatius said that the person who sent him the most Jesuit vocations was St. Philip and St. Philip himself was inspired by the letters sent by St. Francis Xavier to St. Ignatius.

St. Ignatius, St. Francis Xavier and St. Philip Neri model for us priestly fraternity and unity animated by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We think too today of St. Junipero Serra (1713-1784) who in 1773 at the age of 60 travelled 2000 miles from Carmel to Mexico City to protest the injustices of the colonial system and demand that authorities adopt a bill of rights that he had written for the native peoples.⁷

We think of Blessed Fr. Michael McGivney (1852-1890) in his Knights of Columbus Good Samaritan charity toward prisoners on Death Row and to widows and families struggling to survive after the loss of loved ones.⁸

We think of Maryknoll Bishop Francis Xavier Ford (1892-1952) who served as a missionary in China for 34 years and died in a prison camp in 1952 after enduring torture and deprivation at the hands of the community government.⁹

We think of Msgr. Bernard Quinn (1888-1940) who convinced the Diocese of Brooklyn to establish St. Peter Claver Church, the first African-American church in the diocese. He waged a long battle for civil rights for his parishioners and the larger black community. In 1928, Msgr. Quinn founded an orphanage and summer camp in Wading River. The Klu Klux Klan burned the orphanage to the ground twice in

⁷ Cf. Archbishop Jose Gomez as quoted in the September 2020 edition of *Columbia* (Knights of Columbus), 8.

⁸ See Kevin Coyne, "A Priest for his People: *Father McGivney's personal relationships reveal his practical leadership and compassionate heart*," in the November 2020 edition of *Columbia*, 14-21.

⁹ Cf. Paula Katinas, "'He Certainly Deserves to be a Saint': Bishop Francis Xavier Ford Guild promotes Sainthood for Brooklyn-born Missionary," in the January 16, 2021 edition of the *The Tablet* (Diocese of Brooklyn).

the space of a single year. Both times Msgr. Quinn rebuilt it. We draw on his contemplative courage and resilience today.¹⁰

We think of Fr. Rutilio Grande (1928-1977) from El Salvador who was beatified on January 22nd. Fr. Grande was murdered in 1977. He was a close friend and a source of inspiration for St. Oscar Romero. Together they stood up against the Salvadoran government's repression during the early days of the nation's 12-year civil war.

We draw on the courage and fidelity of these great Good Samaritan bishops and priests as we renew our Priestly Promises.

Allow me to conclude where I started: Brothers, you are an inspiration to me and to all you serve! Thank you!

Together we pray to God the Father that “the mystery of this oil, bring to completion the growth of your Church, until she reaches the measure of fullness in which you, resplendent with eternal light, will be all in all with Christ in the Holy Spirit forever and ever.”¹¹

¹⁰ Cf. Paula Katinas, “Msgr. Quinn Fought Against Racism By Rebuilding and Renewing Faith,” in the April 10, 2021 edition of *The Tablet* (Diocese of Brooklyn).

¹¹ Consecratory Prayer II of the Chrism Mass.