



Diocese of St. Petersburg

6363 9th Ave N, St. Petersburg, FL 33710

BACKGROUND ABOUT THE CHRISM MASS

The Mass of Chrism usually takes place on Holy Thursday, but since the Diocese of St. Petersburg is so large and the priests and other people have to travel so far, it is held on Tuesday in the Cathedral during Holy Week. (The Diocese of St. Petersburg includes people in Pinellas, Hillsborough, Pasco, Hernando and Citrus counties.)

At this Mass, priests, in the presence of the bishop, renew their personal dedication to Jesus Christ, promise to unite themselves closer to Christ and renew their commitment to priestly service. The people promise to support their priests and the bishop asks everyone to pray for him.

During this calendar year 2015, twenty of our brother priests will celebrate a 25th, 40th, 50th, and 60th anniversary of ordination. As is our tradition, Bishop Lynch will honor them at this Mass.

During the Mass of Chrism, the Oil of Chrism is consecrated by the bishop. The bishop mixes olive oil and balsam in a large container before consecrating the Oil of Chrism. This oil is used in local churches during the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, in the Cathedral for the sacrament of Holy Orders, and in the blessing of new church altars.

Parish priests or deacons transport the Oil of Chrism to their local parishes and missions.

The bishop also blesses the Oil of Catechumens and the Oil of the Sick. The Oil of Catechumens is used in a ceremony with people who are preparing to enter the Catholic Church, before they are baptized. The Oil of the Sick is used in the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, when people who are seriously ill are blessed.

Two representatives from 74 parishes, the University of South Florida, Pastoral Center and 7 missions in the Diocese bring vessels of olive oil for the bishop to bless for the Oil of Catechumens and the Oil of the Sick. These blessed oils are brought back to their parishes and missions and solemnly presented during local Holy Thursday evening services.

JUBILARIANS 2015

25TH ANNIVERSARY

Rev. Damian Amantia, T.O.R. (Pastor, St. Mary, Our Lady of Grace, St. Petersburg)

Rev. David DeJulio (Pastor, St. Mark the Evangelist, Tampa)

Rev. Joseph J. Kalarickal, M.S.T. (Parochial Vcar, Our Lady Queen of Peace, New Port Richey)

Rev. George P. Varkey, M.S.T. (Parochial Vicar, St. Thomas Aquinas, NPR)

40TH ANNIVERSARY

Rev. Dennis E. Hughes (Pastor, St. Peter the Apostle, Trinity)

Rev. Augustine Mailadiyil (Parochial Vicar, Prince of Peace, Sun City Center)

Rev. Msgr. Joseph F. McCahon (Retired)

Rev. Jacob Monteleone (Pastor, Light of Christ, Clearwater)

50TH ANNIVERSARY

Rev. Msgr. Algimantas A. Bartkus (Retired)

Rev. Kenneth P. Bonadies (Retired)

Rev. Thomas Burns, S.C.J. (Retired, Sacred Heart Residence)

Rev. Msgr. J. Bernard Caverly (Pastor Emeritus, St. Raphael, St. Petersburg)

Rev. Msgr. Colman M. Cooke (Retired)

Rev. Kenneth Gerth, M.C.C.J. (Chaplain, St. Joseph Hospital)

Rev. Msgr. Austin Mullen (Retired)

60TH ANNIVERSARY

Rev. Roger L. Bisson, M.Afr. (Retired, Missionaries of Africa Residence)

Rev. Clement F. Comesky, O.F.M. (Retired, St. Anthony Friary)

Rev. Alexander A. Di Lella, O.F.M. (Retired, St. Anthony Friary)

Rev. Jaime Diaz (Retired)

Rev. Brendan Lawlor (Retired)

CHRISM MASS HOMILY 2015
March 31, 2015
Cathedral of St. Jude the Apostle
Most Reverend Robert N. Lynch, Bishop

The late bishop John Nevins of Venice with whom I spent five of the first six years of my priesthood would often tell the story of what happened to him late in his formation for priesthood, indeed just weeks before he was to be ordained a sub-deacon. An only child of an Irish mother and English father who separated and divorced shortly after young John was born, John J. Nevins could only find one religious order and no diocese which would accept him as a seminarian for the priesthood. That one community was called The Fathers of Mercy. Finishing his studies at Catholic University in Washington, John Nevins in the Spring of the final year came home from class to the Fathers of Mercy house only to be told that the community had been dissolved, its ordained were free to find any benevolent bishop or other order who would accept them and as for the seminarians, "clear your room out, move, stay warm and well fed." As he approached the end of telling this story, he would always end it with this line: "There was no mercy to be found in the Fathers of Mercy, buster!" I know of few priests in my soon to be forty years who was kinder, more merciful and forgiving than John J. Nevins. He lived the virtue under whose title he longed to minister.

We have been hearing a lot about mercy the last two years, much of it emanating from the Holy Father. He has challenged the whole Church, all those who have been anointed with the sacred chrism in baptism, confirmation, and priesthood and episcopacy, to new heights of merciful ministry. He has preached forgiveness, inclusion, welcoming not just the sinner but also the foreigner, the immigrant, the poor. He has joined his ministry of words with a rich panoply of encounter and gesture. He has called us all, but especially we bishops to a simpler lifestyle more in touch with all God's people which might make us more aware and understanding of the pain of poverty. The one constant through the first two years has been the bedrock belief in the mercy of God which we have both received as a gift of the spirit of God to share with the world and we have been anointed with oil to heal the wounds of people, some of which even the Church we love have caused.

Allow me for a few moments this Holy Week to reflect on the image of oil, noted in today's very familiar readings by both Isaiah and Jesus. The glass jars which await our prayers of blessing contain simple olive oil though to the chrism will soon be joined an aromatic. All oil (olive and petroleum) has three aspects worth a few seconds: value, volatility and viscosity.

VALUE we have learned in recent times from oil spills in the Gulf of Mexico, to wars of religion over oil in the Arabian gulfs, to four dollars a gallon at the pump

to a 125% increase in the cost of Chanel No 5 in the last ten years. From King David through to the Saudi princes, oil is worth a lot, of money, sadly of lives lost and environment destroyed. So for moderns the oil has value and for the ancients it did as well. It healed the wounded, anointed the chosen leaders, was then and is now one of the more valuable fruits of God's creation. And it is shared with us in sacraments. When we use it properly it dispenses mercy and love on the newborn, comforts the sick and aged and when accompanied by sacramental confession it too dispenses God's mercy on the scared, the scarred, the solitary soul in search of God.

VOLATILITY – Oil also ignites more readily than other liquids. Jesus says that the anointing he received ignited in him a fierce blessed rage for order (in the words of David Tracy decades ago). It made him palpably burn within to bring healing to the sick, hope to the homeless, compassion for the poor, freedom not just to jailed prisoners but the freedom of mercy and the love of God and the presence of Jesus Christ to those imprisoned by addiction, by religious laws that limited love, and an end to tyranny from whatever source which limited mankind's ability to drink at the cool well of mercy, kindness, love, compassion and forgiveness.

Tell me one sinner in the Gospel who having acknowledged his or her sin was dismissed by the Son of God without healing. The highly volatile oil of his anointing set Jesus on fire with the desire to establish his Father's kingdom – a fire that did not cease within him until his penultimate breath in one Gospel account: ***“brother, this day you shall me with me in paradise!*** Has our anointing in baptism spent all its volatility or is the fire within us to reconcile the world heating up again to the point where we have a blessed rage for dispensing God's mercy and compassion?

VISCOSITY – All oil is thick, gooey, and sticky, even olive oil. Just try to get it off your hands after confirming 150 youngsters – even lemon does not really cut it. My fingers continue to smell like PLEDGE furniture polish through at least three washings – but I digress! It is precisely the perfect image in a way to describe our ministry when it is working. What we do well sticks. What we offer is sometimes thick. Our ministry of mercy often moves far more slowly than we might wish. Maybe it is time in a sense to apply a merciful thinner to our passion for compassion. Pope Francis certainly does it, daily in his Mass homilies, in his brief but sticky audience teachings. Listen to how his words should stimulate all of us to a deeper engagement in social action ministry:

“These days there is a lot of poverty in the world and that's a scandal when we have so many resources to give to everyone. We all have to think about how we can become a little poorer.”

“A little bit of mercy makes the world less cold and more just”

“We must restore hope to young people, help the old, be open to the future, spread love, be poor among the poor. We need to include the excluded and preach peace.”

“Although the life of a person is in a land full of thorns and weeds, there is always a space in which the good seed can grow. You have to trust God.

With Peter and under Peter my prayer is that today, recalling the awesome power of anointing in our own lives, everyone here has been anointed, most likely at least twice, we may ignite again in our hearts and in our ministry the joy in being agents of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. ***“The joy of God is the joy of forgiveness. It is the joy of the shepherd who finds his lost sheep, the joy of the women who finds her lost coin; the joy of the Father who welcomes home his lost son.”***

Ah, the oil of gladness. My brother priests, this very Holy Father speaks to us often, challenges us, wants us to once again recover the fire of the day the sacred chrism was spread on our hands, the day of our ordination. He particularly it would seem focuses on our ministry of reconciliation. Most all of you have given of yourselves the past few weeks with penance services, The Light Is On For You, and hours in the box. You are very good, indeed wonderful at this expression of tender mercy. Your anointed hands and your blessed words become the sign of the forgiveness of God.

“The service that a priest assumes, a ministry, on behalf of God, to forgive sins is very delicate and requires that his heart be at peace, . . .that he not mistreat the faithful, but that he be gentle, benevolent and merciful, that he know how to plant hope in hearts and, above all, that he be aware that the brother or sister or sister who approaches the sacrament of reconciliation seeking forgiveness does so just as many people approached Jesus to be healed. . . The penitent faithful have the right, all the faithful have the right, to find in priests servants of the forgiveness of God.

Lawrence O’Donnell, a commentator on MSNBC likened the Pope’s remarks on one occasion to his last Catholic school teacher, a Father Harrington. ***“Father Harrington knew that he was our last religion teacher,”*** O’Donnell said. ***“He didn’t use that final year of class time to cram our heads with rules and condemnations. . .Father Harrington talked only about the things that mattered the most in Catholicism, which meant he talked about God and love and goodness and kindness, and he never talked about sin.*** O’Donnell continued by noting that Pope Francis seems to be eager to deliver the same message. ***“The dogmatic and moral teachings of the church are not al equivalent. The Church’s pastoral ministry cannot be obsessed with the transmission of a disjointed multitude of doctrine to be imposed insistently.*** Indeed, O’Donnell noted, the Pope Francis warned that the moral authority of the church could ***“fall like a house of cards”*** if its condemnations are the only thing people ever hear about. Quoting the Pope, ***“The proposal of the Gospel must be more simple, profound, radiant. It is from this proposition that the moral consequences then flow.”*** O’Donnell in that electronic moment ended his reflection with “If Father Harrington was still with us, he would like this pope. A lot.”

Beginning soon we shall together plan for how as a local Church we shall observe the year of grace to begin in November called the Holy Year of Mercy. It could well be a very graced moment – a moment of mercy. Let no one in these five counties say of us what Bishop Nevins said of the manner in which he was treated by a community to which he had already given years: “There is no mercy to be found in this local Church, buster!”