



Bishop Gary Gordon



CHRISM MASS

St. Andrew's Cathedral

March 22, 2018

I've got notes this time! I don't usually have notes, but there's a few things that I want to be very accurate about.

And sometimes my memory fails me just momentarily. But I wanted to begin this homily in this beautiful moment of the Chrism Mass with a quote from the First

Reading, and then to continue to look at the First Reading and the Gospel, particularly for what it means to be *anointed ones*.

This is where I'll begin: *All who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed.*

That's you! All who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed. Don't look over your shoulder! It is you. All of us, here. The Word of God goes on to describe God's people as *anointed*. Anointed. We are the anointed ones by virtue of our baptism and confirmation, and the Sacrament of Holy Orders. *Anointed*.

And we are anointed and consecrated in the same way that Jesus Christ was anointed and consecrated. And the question, of course, is: *For what? Why?*

Well, first of all, let me remind you and our brother priests, and myself, that this home here, our home, St. Andrew's Cathedral, at this moment, is filled with amazing gifts, contained in us. One of the wonderful things about being here for a little more than three years, is, I actually

know some people! I actually know my brother priests quite well. *Better than you think!*

And I know many of you quite well. I've had opportunity to be in your communities, and to stay awhile. You are

“Lord, make us a priestly people, to do Your pastoral plan, as given in your Holy Word, and the prophet Isaiah, and the Gospel of Luke. Give us grace, Lord, give us strength, to live your pastoral plan, so that all may know the year of the Lord's favour.”

amazing. The gifts that the Holy Spirit has poured out upon this congregation, and upon the congregations in our Diocese, are amazing, are everything that we could ever wish for. Everything that is needed in this Diocese is here. We don't have to get anybody to come in from outside to be the fullness of the Church of God in this Diocese. Because, my experience in knowing you, in knowing my brothers, is all the gifts are here for the fullness of the proclamation of the Good News of the Gospel of joy, right here.



And now I go back to that question: *For what are we anointed as a priestly people? For what are we ordained as a ministerial priesthood?* Let me give two reflections on that.

The first one is that there is only one priesthood of Jesus Christ, by virtue of baptism, which is lived out, and seen, in a twofold reality of the priesthood of Christ: with giftedness, and with leadership.

The leadership of the priestly people, found in the ordained, is to be at the absolute service of the whole people that live in this Diocese. Now, the priests have heard me say this before, when I'm in their parishes, "Father, did you know that you are responsible for every living soul in your geographic boundaries? Not just the ones who show up at church: you're responsible for all of them." And as I say that, oftentimes they kind of sink in the chair a bit. But then, they are lifted by the fact that they look out and they see the giftedness of the priestly people of God, who together share a responsibility for all those people.

To do what, though? What's it all about, to be a priestly people with gifts of leadership, and gifts of service, and gifts to be the body of Christ?

This is where my second point lies. And here we go directly to the First Reading and the Gospel, and we find the words that describe our collaborative effort together as the Church of God in this Diocese. Here's the description of how the prophet Isaiah and Jesus Christ saw themselves as a priestly people, and a ministerial people, and a people of service. These are words I think would give a pastoral plan in a parish, and in a diocese, and these are definitely challenging words.

But they're not my words, they are the Word of God, about what it is we are about. What it is to be Church, what it is to be anointed ones.

Anointed for bringing Good News to the oppressed. Anointed to bind up the brokenhearted. Anointed to give liberty to captives, release to prisoners, and to comfort all who mourn.

And in the Gospel:

Anointed to bring Good News to the poor, release to captives, sight to the blind, and let the oppressed go free, in a year of favour from the Lord.

That's the pastoral plan of Jesus Christ! That's the pastoral plan of our God! At every single Finance Committee meeting, and every single Parish Council meeting, this should be the Mission Statement: God's Word about what we are anointed for. The oppressed. The brokenhearted. Captives. Prisoners. Those who mourn. The poor.

And how does that happen? The same way that Jesus made it happen. *Closeness.*

That's why we use oil. You know, we don't use a spray bomb for the oil. Oil can only be applied when we are really close. *Really* close. And this pastoral plan given to us by the Word of God—for the oppressed, the brokenhearted, the captives, prisoners, the mourners, the poor, the blind—this pastoral plan can only happen the same way that Jesus Christ made it happen—my dear brothers and sisters, because he was close. I think Pope Francis likens it to smelling like sheep.

This is a big challenge. I don't want you to get the wrong idea, but nothing in this list refers to the cultic actions of the liturgy. It doesn't talk about Mass, or Church. Not that Mass and Church aren't good, to give



us strength and grace, but if we're going to craft a pastoral plan as anointed ones, together as God's people, as a priestly people in the image and likeness of the priesthood of Jesus Christ, then I am holding out to my brother priests, and to God's people of the Diocese, a vision. A vision of radical closeness, and accompaniment.

We don't have to go too far to find the oppressed, or the brokenhearted, for sure. If I just count the number of funerals that Fr. Roger, Fr. Joe, and I have done for victims of suicide ... the brokenhearted. The captives. *Oh my.* People's souls are so captive. Those who mourn. The poor. The blind.

We are anointed, and as the prophet Isaiah says, *All who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed.* Let us count our blessings, the gifts that have

been poured out so abundantly upon this people, this Diocese, and let us put all of our gifts at the foot of the Cross of Jesus Christ, and say:

Lord, make us a priestly people, to do Your pastoral plan, as given in your Holy Word, and the prophet Isaiah, and the Gospel of Luke. Give us grace, Lord, give us strength, to live your pastoral plan, so that all may know the year of the Lord's favour.

The Lord's favour, for every single person in this beautiful Diocese, where the water never freezes, and the blossoms come out early, and the sun shines, and we live a perpetual springtime.

Let us be that springtime in the pastoral plan of God's Holy Word.

Amen.



Photos courtesy Connie Dunwoody.