



The Holy See

CHRISM MASS

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Basilica of St Peter

Holy Thursday, 12 April 1979

1. Today, on the threshold of his Holy Triduum, we wish in a particular way to profess our faith in Christ, in him whose passion we must renew in the spirit of the Church, so that all "shall look on him whom they have pierced" (Jn 19:37), and the present generation of the earth's inhabitants bewail and lament him (cf. Lk 23:27). This is the Christ: he in whom God comes to mankind as Lord of history: "*I am the Alpha and the Omega... who is and who was and who is to come*" (Rev. 1:8).

This is the Christ "who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20), Christ, who came to obtain for us "with his own blood... an eternal redemption" (Heb. 9:12). Christ: the "Anointed", the Messiah. Once Israel, on the eve of her liberation from slavery in Egypt, marked the doors of the houses with the blood of the lamb (cf. Ex 12: 1-14). Behold, the Lamb of God is among us, he whom the Father himself anointed with power and with the Holy Spirit, and sent into the world (cf. Jn 1:29; Acts 10:36-38).

Christ: the *Anointed*, the Messiah. During these days, with the power of the Holy Spirit's anointing, with the power of the fullness of the sanctity which is in him, and in him alone, he will cry to God "with a loud voice" (Lk 23:46), the voice of humiliation, of annihilation, of the cross: "O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold" (Ps. 17 (18): 2).

Thus he will cry for himself and for us.

2. Today we celebrate the liturgy of the Chrism, through which the Church, on the threshold of

these holy days, *wants to renew the sign of that power of the Spirit which she has received from her Redeemer and Bridegroom.*

This power of the Spirit—grace and sanctity, which is in him—is imparted, at the price of the passion and death, to mankind through the sacraments of the faith. Thus the People of God is continuously built up, as the Second Vatican Council Teaches: "The faithful, by virtue of their royal priesthood, participate in the offering of the Eucharist. They exercise that priesthood, too, by the reception of the sacraments, prayer and thanksgiving, the witness of a holy life, abnegation and active charity" (*Lumen Gentium*, 10).

With this holy oil, Oil of the Catechumens, the catechumens will be anointed during baptism, to be able to be then anointed with the Holy Chrism. They will receive this anointing a second time in the sacrament of Confirmation. They will also receive it—if called—during ordinations: deacons, priests, and bishops. In the sacrament of the sick, all invalids will receive the anointing with the oil of the sick (cf. James 5:14).

Today we wish to prepare the Church for the new year of grace, for the administration of the sacraments of the faith, which have their centre in the Eucharist. All the sacraments, both those whose sign is anointing, and those administered without this sign, such as penance and matrimony, signify an effective participation in the power of him whom the Father himself anointed and sent into the world (cf. Lk 4:18).

Today, Holy Thursday, we celebrate the *liturgy of this power*, which reached its fullness in the weaknesses of Good Friday, in the torments of his passion and agony, because it was through all that suffering that Christ procured grace for us: "Grace to you and peace... from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth" (Rev 1:4-5).

3. Through his abandonment to the Father, *through his obedience until death*, he also made us a "*kingdom of priests*" (Rev. 1:6).

He proclaimed it on the solemn day on which he shared bread and wine with the apostles, as his Body and Blood for the world's salvation. And it is just today that we are called to live this day: the feast of priests. Today our hearts newly respond to the mysteries of the Supper table, at which Christ, with the first Eucharist, said: "Do this in remembrance of me" (Lk 22:19), thus instituting the Sacrament of the priesthood. And thus what the prophet Isaiah had said centuries before came to pass: "You shall be called the priests of the Lord, men shall speak of you as the ministers of our God" (Is 61:6).

Today we feel the warmest desire to be present at the altar for this eucharistic concelebration and to render *thanks for the particular gift* which the Lord has conferred on us. Conscious of the greatness of this grace, we further wish to renew the vows which each one of us, on the day of his

own ordination, made to Christ and to the Church, depositing them in the hands of the Bishop. In renewing them, we ask for the grace of fidelity and perseverance. We also ask that the grace of the priestly vocation may fall on the ground of many young souls, and that it may take root in them as seeds which yield a hundredfold (cf. Lk 8:8).

Today, bishops in their cathedrals throughout the world do likewise, as is required of them. Together with priests they renew the vows made on the day of their ordination. Let us join with them with yet more ardour *through brotherhood in the faith and in the vocation* that we attained at the Supper table as the particular legacy bequeathed us by the Apostles.

Let us persevere in this great priestly community, as servants of the People of God, and as disciples and lovers of him who was made obedient unto death, and who came into the world not to be served, but to serve! (cf. Mt 20:28).

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