

Homily for the Chrism Mass
Cathedral Basilica of St. Augustine
Bishop Felipe J. Estévez
St. Augustine, Florida
April 12, 2017

Let us rejoice together that in virtue of our baptism and confirmation, we are all a priestly people, chosen to glorify the Eternal Father, to praise His Holy Name. How blessed we are to be believers, as Blessed Charlie of Puerto Rico would often say: “I live for the Night, Vivo para la Noche” (I live toward the Easter Vigil).

All the parishes and missions of this diocese are well represented today. As you bring back with you the newly consecrated oils, let the reception of these oils in the parishes take place with joy and solemnity as an important moment of the liturgical life of the parish!

Dear people, you pray often for an increase of vocations as the Master asked, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few, ask the Lord of the harvest to send workers into his harvest field” (Mt. 9: 35-38). And you do pray! I call upon you, children, youth and young adults to be wide open to the desires of the Holy Spirit in your lives. It is such an honor to dedicate our best talents for the service of God in spreading the good news of the Gospel of mercy. I rejoice at the practice initiated by Bishop Tanner, the 7th bishop of our succession, to invite all the altar servers to the Chrism Mass. Dear altar servers, could you experience the joy of saying to the Lord like Samuel, “Here I am” (1 Samuel 3:4)? The life of a consecrated religious woman or the priestly service and the many other forms of total consecration just need players for the game to start. Let us play!

We are so blessed for the number of discerners who are exploring, with the assistance of spiritual directors, the signs of a vocation, their personal capacity and the long term consequences of choices. You are not alone. The Lord is with you in this precious process. The Church prays for you. Be not afraid!

Dear Seminarians, we celebrate your Marian fiat, your generous yes to serve the Lord in the Diocese of St Augustine. Your perseverance, your love for this local Church, your commitment to study hard makes us so proud of you. The coming priestly ordination of Deacons Briggs and Wilson fills us with excitement and anticipation.

The renewal of priestly promises takes place in the entire universal Church *urbe ate orbe* during the Chrism Mass. Let us prepare for it.

The personnel board is a group of elected priests who advise the Bishop on assignments. They work very hard and very well. The Chair, Fr. James Boddie begins each meeting with this prayer:

Loving God, I ask for a special blessing on all the priests of my presbyterate.

Help us to remember always that we do not work alone, but that we are an “intimate sacramental brotherhood” under the leadership of our bishop, a ministry team for which we are all responsible.

For the sake of our unified and coherent ministry, help us to remember that the ministry we do is not just personal; but a share in our bishop's ministry. For that reason, keep us always respectful of and obedient to his leadership.

Help us to be diligent in our ministry, absorbed in it, so that our commitment may be evident and our service helpful.

Help us to take good care of ourselves and to be attentive to becoming more effective in our service.

Show us ways to encourage our brothers in the seminary, those in formation who will someday be partners with us in service to the Church. Help us to set a good example for them in all that we do.

Support our sick, retired and absent brothers with your loving care.

I ask this in the name of the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

I wish that the entire Presbyterate keep these intentions close to their hearts.

Today's psalm echoes this priestly existence in a remarkable synergy: "Forever I will sing the goodness of the Lord!"

Taking a close look at the psalm, we notice that David is chosen (it is not you who chose me but I who chose you); David is consecrated (your hands were also anointed with the holy chrism), David is promised a future of hope (I want you to be fruitful) - in a life of intimacy, as in an active covenant with the living God. The complexities and the many challenges faced by priests do not take away the joyful experience of being a man for God's praises.

Today, I celebrate those elder priests as well as Bishops Snyder and Galeone who having completed their official assignment yet witness a priestly vitality first of all by their faithful prayer of the daily Mass and Liturgy of the Hours, and for their pastoral availability in a spirit of remarkable service and support to our parishes and their pastors. You state loudly that apostolic ministry is not a burden but a passion of love!

At times in a situation when you are no longer pastor or do not have an important responsibility, you may experience emptiness or solitude, certain weariness within. As Pope Francis said, let this entire offering raise as incense to the Lord. Do not let other substitutes fill that space. Instead, let the Lord console you. Let the Spirit guide you to a deeper layer of peaceful, faithful surrender, a deeper, manly renewed gift of self.

It is our practice to pay respect to the Eucharistic Lord when we elevate the host and the chalice in reverential awe.

St. Augustine could help us to be more concretely focused. Augustine says in sermon 228, "Recognize in the host that which was hanging on the wood, recognize in the chalice that which was pouring from his pierced side."

Let us celebrate this Eucharist today as the Sacrament of the Holy Triduum, or as St. Thomas would call it: the Eucharist is the sacrament of the passion.

The Lord asked, “Do this in memory of me.” The mother of the Lord said in the Johannine wedding at Cana of Galilee, “Do whatever he tells you.”

Believe me, there is no other doing that makes such a profound difference!