

Dear friends,

Each year we gather in Holy Week to affirm again our commitment to the ministry to which we believe we have each been called. We pause, individually and together, to remember whose we are and why we first said ‘yes’ to Jesus’ invitation to join him in his work and life.

As we come together in this most profound way we also bless the oils which will touch so many lives in the year to come. These simple oils, ordinary in many ways, will be carried from this place to our churches, homes, hospitals, the prison, and schools around something very simple: oil.

Olive oil—drawn from the earth, shaped by human hands. And yet, in the mystery of God’s grace, it becomes something more. It becomes a sign of the Holy Spirit, a bearer of healing, a mark of consecration, a means of mission.

Today, we bless three oils: the Oil of the Sick, the Oil of Catechumens, and the Sacred Chrism. Each speaks a different word—but together, they tell one story: the story of a people chosen, anointed, and sent.

In the Old Testament, anointing is always decisive. It marks the moment when God sets someone apart. Not for privilege, nor for power, but for God’s purpose; lives given over to the service of God.

This is the horizon of the words we hear from the prophet Isaiah: *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me.”* Anointed—for what? For mission: to bring good news to the poor, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to captives.

And in Jesus, those words are fulfilled completely. He is the Anointed One—the Christ. The very title *Christ* comes from the Greek *Christos*, meaning “the one who is anointed.”

He is the one upon whom the Spirit rests without measure.

But how does He live that anointing?

This week of all weeks gives us the answer—and it is not what the world expects. At the Last Supper, the disciples argue about greatness. They are still thinking in terms of rank, status, recognition. And Jesus responds with a sentence that must reshape our understanding of everything: *“I am among you as one who serves.”*

The Anointed One kneels.

The Anointed One gives Himself.

The Anointed One pours Himself out.

Here is the truth: anointing is not about elevation. It is about dedication. It is not about being set above others, but being poured out, given for others that they might be set free.

Paul takes us even deeper. He reminds us that *“where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom,”* and that we are being transformed into the image of Christ. And then he speaks with striking realism: *“We hold this treasure in earthen vessels.”*

The anointing we receive does not remove our fragility—it enters into it. It shines through it. It makes of our weakness a place where the power of Christ can be seen.

And this brings us back to the oils before us today.

The Oil of Baptism: strengthening and sealing those who are baptised. It speaks of preparation since God is at work, drawing, protecting, giving new beginnings.

The Oil of the Sick: a sign of healing and consolation. It meets us in our vulnerability—in illness, in suffering, in the approach of death. Here, anointing reveals one of its most tender meanings: God does not stand at a distance from human pain. He enters it. He sustains and soothes. He restores. He heals. And even when physical healing is not given, grace is given—peace, courage, union with Christ.

And then, the Sacred Chrism.

Chrism is oil, made fragrant, consecrated with solemn prayer. Its very name is significant. *Chrism* shares its root with *Christ*. It comes from the Greek *chrisma*, meaning “anointing.” To be marked with Chrism is to be marked with Christ—to belong to Him in a definitive way.

These oils we bless today will be used in Baptism, sealing the newly baptized as members of Christ’s Body.

They will be used in Confirmation, strengthening believers with the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

They will be used in Holy Orders, consecrating priests and bishops for service in the Church and the world.

And in each case, Jesus is drawing near as the Anointed One and the he anoints that we might participate in His anointing and share in His mission.

So today is not simply about the blessing of oils. It is about our identity in Him. We are an anointed people.

And that raises a question: do we live as those who have been anointed? Do we teach others in our care that they too are part of Christ’s anointed people?

Do we, and they, understand that to be baptized is to be sent?

That to be confirmed is to be strengthened for witness?

That every anointing carries within it a mission?

The temptation remains what it was at the Last Supper: to see anointing as status, as recognition, as something that sets us apart in a way that serves ourselves.

But Christ will not allow that misunderstanding to stand.

“I am among you as one who serves.”

If we are anointed in Him, then like Him our lives are to be poured out but ever renewed.

The world does not need an anointed people who seek prominence. It needs an anointed people who serve—who bring healing where there is suffering, hope where there is despair, freedom where there is bondage.

Today oils are to be blessed and they will go forth into every corner of the diocese. They will touch lives at their beginning, in their growth, in their suffering, and at moments of vocation and calling.

But first, here, now they speak to us and remind us that we belong to Christ and we are invited to receive his anointing anew.

Only then are we sent to share His anointing and serve in His name.

That every time we gather people around His table, every time we break open the Word, every act of ministry we undertake, every prayer for those who long for freedom may be a participation in his anointing ministry.

May the Spirit who anointed Christ anoint us anew today.
May He renew in us the grace of every anointing we have received.
And may our lives, like the Chrism we consecrate,
carry the fragrance of Christ into the world. Amen.