



CORPUS CHRISTI COMMUNION

**+His Eminence Jose Israel, DD, CDM.
Presiding Archbishop**

PASTORAL LETTER TO THE PRIESTS—LENT 2018

In this Lent of the year 2018, I invite all our priests and pastors to become mediators between the people and our Lord. You must be recognized amongst other men on how you are able to anoint the people you reach out to with the love and heart of our Lord.

Jesus is spoken of as the Christ and the Messiah, which means He is the one anointed of the Father to be His personal representative in all things pertaining to the salvation of mankind. The English word *Christ* is from a Greek word meaning “anointed” and is the equivalent of *Messiah*, which is from a Hebrew and Aramaic term meaning “anointed.”

“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified”. Is. 61:1-3 Prophet Isaiah speaks about the Messiah—The Messiah will have the Spirit, preach the gospel, and proclaim liberty—In the last days, the Lord will call His ministers and make an everlasting covenant with the people.

On the same topic Luke says: *“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free”*. Lk 4:18

Priests...Pastors---you must place in your shoulders the people you have been confided--- become a Good Sheppard... keep all their names in your hearts, that is to become the live tabernacle of our Lord within yourself. Become a humble servant, who can feel the weight of your people's needs every time you celebrate mass or pray. Remember all saints and martyrs while praying for your people.

Priests...Pastors---as custodians of the richness of our liturgy, enrich the glory of our Lord and make him be present amongst his people through your daily actions. We are not priests to be glorified ourselves, but to glorify Him through us.

In the *Acts of the Apostles* we read: "After their release they went back to their own people and reported what the chief priests and elders had told them. And when they heard it, they raised their voices to God with one accord and said, "Sovereign Lord, maker of heaven and earth and the sea and all that is in them, you said by the holy Spirit through the mouth of our father David, your servant:

'Why did the Gentiles rage and the peoples entertain folly? The kings of the earth took their stand and the princes gathered to get her against the Lord and against his anointed. 'Indeed they gathered in this city against your holy servant Jesus whom you anointed, Herod and Pontius Pilate, together with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do what your hand and [your] will had long ago planned to take place. And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and enable your servants to speak your word with all boldness, as you stretch forth [your] hand to heal, and signs and wonders are done through the name of your holy servant Jesus.' Acts 4: 23-30

Priests...Pastors--- you have been ordained to ministry to, among other things, take the Lord's anointment to the poor, to the oppressed, to the sick... be holy men on behalf of the Lord and amongst His people. The holy oil used for anointing is not to be used as a perfume for ourselves, nor to keep it in the bottle, since it will go bad.

"How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power. He went about doing good and healing all those oppressed by the devil, for God was with him". Acts 10:38

Priests...Pastors--- in our ordination we were anointed with the oil of joy. You must come out of the mass celebration with a face of having received the good news and be willing to give them to everyone. We must be identified with Jesus, as his Apostles, so that people will ask us to pray for them, bless them, to anoint them.

Priests...Pastors...go out and experiment the unction of the perfumed oil that was blessed to anoint the sick, the suffering, the blind...the captive. Get out of your comfort zones and experiment the power of anointing people in the name of Jesus, our Lord. Experiment the redeeming efficacy of anointing people and return them their peace or alleviate their physical or spiritual sufferings. There are many people captives of their own sufferings who don't know how to escape from evil.

Priests...Pastors...don't minimize the power of the active grace. Go out with faith and offer the teachings of the gospels to everyone; anoint those who don't have anything. The priest who does not anoint his people—misses the best of them, which is what reactivates your ministry, your passion for His disciples. You were anointed in your ordination to serve Him. The good priest is to be recognized by being able to walk among the men and women he has been set in place to be their pastor. He must reach out to everybody in his neighborhood or parish on a daily basis.

Priests...Pastors--- through you and your hands these words are to help in the physical and spiritual healing of our brothers and sisters: *“As you are outwardly anointed with this holy oil, so may our heavenly Father grant you the inward anointing of the Holy Spirit. Of his great mercy, may he forgive you your sins, release you from suffering, and restore you to wholeness and strength. May he deliver you from all evil, preserve you in all goodness, and bring you to everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen”*.

Priests...Pastors--- As priests we spend not a little time in health care facilities – hospitals, nursing homes, assisted living centers, the homes of parishioners – where we are granted the sacred privilege of being welcomed into moments of human weakness and vulnerability. It is a holy trust, and one that is best approached prayerfully and with great humility.

It is not only the patient who feels weak and vulnerable at such times though; as a priest I have felt that way myself. I stand in the intensive care unit surrounded by scores of machines whose price tags can only be imagined, as efficient doctors bustle around with their extensive knowledge and hard won expertise. Nurses exhibit their compassionate skill in practical ways that leave me standing clumsily in the corner, out of their way. Orderlies and nutritionists serve vital roles. ***But what of a priest? What do I offer? What can I do? I come “equipped” with a stock of oil and a prayer book, and on some occasions, with bread and wine. I can anoint. I can pray. I can bless. I can absolve. I can consecrate. I can be present. What are these compared to the expertise and efficiency of highly trained medical personnel?*** Though it is a false dichotomy I know, if the patient had the choice of either doctor or priest but not of both, do we wonder which he would choose? Weakness. Vulnerability.

But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption¹ so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord". 1 Cor 1:27-31

Thus blessed, the oil is sacramental, an outward and visible sign and channel of a hidden and inner grace through which the sick are made whole. By God's grace, doctors may affect cures. By God's grace, the Holy Spirit working through the priest's oil-smearred thumb may affect wholeness. Who would despise either – physical cure or wholeness? God is the Great Physician of bodies and souls, after all. It is not so much cure but wholeness that we—as Priests and Pastors— carry.

Dear Priests and Pastors:

1. You are anointed vessels of God.
2. You have been cleansed by God and been filled with the Holy Spirit.
3. Not only is He in you but also He is upon you.
4. As the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples at Pentecost in the upper room and anointed them for service, you too have been anointed by God with the Holy Spirit for Christian service.
5. You are anointed for Christian ministry while you live in this world.
6. You have been enabled, entrusted, and empowered to accomplish God's will:
 1. You will be able to discern truth - 1 Jn 2:27.
 2. To testify of the truth - 1 Jn 5:6 "This is the one who came by water and blood __ Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth."
 3. You will be able to pray - Rm. 8:39 and Ephesians 6:18 which says, "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. . . "
 4. You will be able to live a righteous life - Rm 8:4 "in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit."
 5. You will be strengthened with power in your inner being – Eph 3:16 "I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being,"
 6. You will be led by God - Rm 8:9 "You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And

if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ."

7. You are to live in joy - *Rm 14:17 "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit,"*
8. You will live in hope - *Rm 15:13 "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."*
9. You will receive spiritual gifts - *1 Cor 12:4 "There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit."*
10. You will be able to bear spiritual fruit – *Gal 5:22-23 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law."*

Hopefully, with a better understanding of what God has given you in Christ and by the Holy Spirit, you will be better able to live for God, better able to pray to Him, love Him, trust Him, and better able to dwell in hope and joy amongst the people He has entrusted you.

Priests...Pastors---*I pray to our Almighty God so that each one of you are felt and seen by your people as real disciples of the Lord; that you may be able to keep their names deep in your hearts, real tabernacle of Jesus; that our fellow Christian brothers and sisters can receive through your words, actions and deeds that joyful oil that Christ, Our Lord, the Anointed, brought us to give to His people.*

AMEN.

Blessings.

+Abp. Jose Israel
Presiding Archbishop

March 1, 2018
Toledo,

Ohio