

# At chrism Mass, archbishop encourages priests to renew church, themselves

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As priests of the Archdiocese of Baltimore prepared to renew their commitment to priestly service March 25, Archbishop William E. Lori reminded them not to be “diverted from holiness.”

“We must be the first to allow the Lord to help us face in our souls whatever hinders or even prevents us from being those priests whose lives bear witness to the Gospel we preach and the sacraments we celebrate,” he said.

The archbishop addressed the priests in his homily at the chrism Mass at the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen in Homeland. The annual liturgy includes the blessing of holy oils and consecration of sacred chrism for use in sacraments during the following year, as well as the renewal of promises for priests.

More than 150 priests attended the Mass. Baltimore Auxiliary Bishops Mitchell T. Rozanski and Denis J. Madden concelebrated the two-hour liturgy, which also included more than 60 permanent deacons.

*To view a slideshow of the Mass, navigate the arrows below.*

In his homily, Archbishop Lori encouraged priests to reflect on what attracted them to the priesthood, and compared their renewal of promises to married couples’ renewal of wedding vows.

“(Married couples) don’t love each other any less because they’ve stayed together in good times and bad times, or because they have struggled with problems and sorrows. No, they love each other more and are even more deeply dedicated to their families,” he said. “This is the spirit in which we are here to rededicate ourselves to the priesthood of Jesus Christ and to the family of faith we are privileged to serve.”

Archbishop Lori warned priests not to become distracted by busyness, and to focus on prayer and Christian witness.

The archbishop also asked consecrated religious and lay Catholics to pray for their priests, pointing to Pope Francis’ request for prayers the day he was elected pope.

He urged them to strive for holiness.

“Even as we priests pray for the grace to accept the good news into our own hearts, so too we pray that you will welcome those same glad tidings in yours,” he said. “We are here, in fact, to help you welcome Christ into your homes and families, to help you find the joy of believing amid the challenges of living and to enlist you as co-workers, as cooperators in truth and love, in sharing the Gospel within the church and beyond.”

After the homily, priests renewed their commitment to priestly service by answering “I am” to three questions asked by Archbishop Lori that focused on service, selflessness and love of God.

Susan Maher, a parishioner of Church of the Nativity in Timonium, said the sight of so many priests reminded her of the unity within the archdiocese.

“You get a sense of tradition,” said Maher, who attended the chrism Mass for the first time.

Monsignor John A. Dietzenbach, pastor of Church of the Resurrection in Ellicott City, said the public annual renewal of promises helps priests make a “deeper commitment.”

“It makes you think about your priesthood every year and what it’s about, and the difference you can make in people’s lives,” he said.

Trinitarian Father Binoy Akkalayil, associate pastor of St. Lawrence Martyr in Jessup, said he appreciated Archbishop Lori’s advice and encouragement.

“We are human, so we need to be reminded,” he said.

Mike Misulia, a seminarian from St. Peter in Libertytown, said the renewal of promises showed “priestly brotherhood.”

“A lot of people think of the priesthood as being no love. I see celibacy as a different kind of love,” he said. “When I see my future brothers in Christ renewing their vows, it’s a great encouragement to me.”

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