

Chrism Mass

(Is. 61:1-3ab, 6a, 8b-9) Three weeks ago yesterday Pope John Paul II concluded his personal Jubilee pilgrimage to the land that is holy, holy to Jews, Christians, and Muslims. The Holy Father's visit took him first to Jordan.

From what is today the land of Jordan came the prophet Isaiah, who inscribed the words Jesus was later to apply to himself at the beginning of his public ministry. This same land of Jordan is holy for many reasons, as the Holy Father reminded us when he visited the site of the baptism of Jesus and prayed to the Triune God, manifested so powerfully at the baptism of the Son of the living God.

Tonight are blessed the oils that will be used in the conferring of the sacraments that Jesus gave the Church. The dynamic of this evening will come to fuller flower on Saturday, at the Easter Vigil, when the Chrism will be used to anoint the catechumens in baptism and both catechumens and candidates when they are confirmed. Will the Catechumens present please stand so that we can acknowledge and encourage them? The Candidates for full communion, will you please stand?

(Lk. 4:16-21) What Isaiah said in prophecy Jesus applied to himself in his words to those assembled in the synagogue at Nazareth. The Spirit had indeed come upon him at the Jordan, the Holy Spirit who led him into the desert for 40 days of prayer and fasting. The same Holy Spirit was with him in the great temptations, at his first miracle at Cana of Galilee, and now as he spoke to the gathering at Nazareth. This evening we pray that the Holy Spirit may bless and strengthen all of us gathered in the Cathedral with a sense of His power at work in our lives, in our ministry in the name of Jesus.

At Nazareth Jesus taught those who listened about his mission: "to bring glad tidings to the poor, ... to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord." These words, we know, describe the ancient Jewish year of Jubilee, and they are word for our year of the Great Jubilee. When Pope John Paul visited the camp at Bethlehem for the Palestinian refugees, the words applied with special force. The refugees have suffered much, losing their homes, outcasts in their own region, beggars before the

world. When we pray for the oppressed and marginalized, we must remember them. They and all of good will in the region are looking for a peace that will be just and enduring. When, in the psalms, we pray for “the peace of Jerusalem,” we should remember the whole region and all those, Palestinian and Israeli, Jew and Christian and Muslim, who yearn for a lasting peace for themselves and for their children.

When we pray for the marginalized, we know that there are concerns closer to home that call for both prayers and action. I take this moment to thank all the parishes and all the individuals who have undertaken the “Beyond the Boundaries” program, initiated under Bishop John Ricard and carried forward well into his illness by Bishop Frank Murphy. I invite other parishes to join. The issue is more than regional. It is statewide in its ramifications, and Bishop Bennett and those who guide it will be making aspects of it available across the Archdiocese.

In Western Maryland, the economic slump had been touching our parishioners for years. This effort will in time help Church as Church have a more prominent role, often working with other church groups, in seeking the development the communities need to recover.

In Baltimore and elsewhere, the spiritual and social cancer of racism must be addressed. As Church, we must actively remind ourselves and our neighbors of the inherent dignity of every human being, no matter what the color of the skin, no matter what neighborhood they live in. We see all of them as God’s children, made in the image and likeness of their Creator. Other community issues, such as