

Chrism Mass emphasizes unity, nods toward pastoral planning

By Erik Zygmunt

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The spirit of pastoral planning was on full display at the Archdiocese of Baltimore's annual Chrism Mass at the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen in Homeland, at which Archbishop William E. Lori consecrates Holy Chrism and blesses the other oils to be used in rites and sacraments during the upcoming liturgical year.

"By praying and working together, we will raise up new vocations to marriage and family, to the priesthood, the diaconate and consecrated life," Archbishop Lori said in his [homily](#).

"By praying and working together, we grow in practicing that charity that evangelizes and helps to transform the society around us in the ways of justice and peace. And yes, by praying and working together, we will ever more become, indeed, that 'light brightly visible,'" he added, referencing the descriptor - coined by Blessed Paul VI - which became the title for his 2015 pastoral letter inaugurating the pastoral planning process in the Baltimore Archdiocese.



Archbishop William E. Lori calls down the Holy Spirit as he breathes over a vessel of Holy Oil during the Chrism Mass celebrated at the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen in Homeland April 10. (Kevin J. Parks/CR Staff)

"I think our community is ready to make this change," said Nancy Drew before the Mass, as she helped set up for the post-liturgy "tailgate," a familiar event in which the Catholic Church of Glen Burnie - a parish including the Church of the Good Shepherd, the Church of the Resurrection and Holy Trinity - provides sandwiches, snacks and drinks.

The three churches, already operating in pastorate format, are expanding their umbrella to include St. Bernadette Church.

“Instead of identifying ourselves as different groups in Glen Burnie, we need to identify ourselves as Catholics of Glen Burnie, serving the people of Glen Burnie,” said Drew, who serves as a youth minister.

Mass-goers from across the archdiocese filled the cathedral, including a large number of adults preparing to become full participants in the Catholic Church at the April 15 Easter Vigil.



Priests from around the Archdiocese of Baltimore renew their vows during the April 10 Chrism Mass. (Kevin J. Parks/CR Staff)

“We meet with these people every week, and it’s a process of seeing them grow in their faith,” said Terri McKernan, one of several RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) instructors at St. Joseph Parish in Odenton. “When we bring them here, they get to see what they’re becoming part of.

“I like the connection of (candidates and catechumens) seeing the oils blessed that will be used to baptize and confirm them,” added Marnea Shamblen, also an RCIA instructor at St. Joseph.

Archbishop Lori blessed both the oils of catechumens, which will be used at the baptisms of those preparing for the sacrament through the Rite of Christian Initiation, and the oils of the sick, which will be used in the sacrament of the anointing of the sick. He also consecrated Holy Chrism, a mixture of olive oil and balsam fragrance, which will be used to anoint the newly baptized, to seal candidates for confirmation and anoint the hands of priests and the heads of bishops at their ordination. It will also be used in the rites of anointing at the dedication of churches and altars.



Father Hamilton E. Okeke, associate pastor of Sacred Heart, Glyndon, picks up his parish's Holy Oils from Patricia Harrison following the Chrism Mass celebrated by Archbishop William E. Lori at the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen in Homeland April 10. (Kevin J. Parks/CR Staff)

As part of the consecration rite, the archbishop breathed over a vessel containing the chrism - calling down the Holy Spirit.

Priests "from Dundalk to Oakland, from Laurel to Havre de Grace, and all points in between," as the archbishop put it in his greeting, also renew their commitments at the Chrism Mass, affirming their continuing duties to the church and its people.

Laities frequently marvel at the seemingly endless procession of clergy at the start of the Mass, which this year included four miters. Bishops Adam J. Parker and Mark E. Brennan, auxiliary bishops of Baltimore, as well as Bishop Denis J. Madden, auxiliary bishop emeritus of Baltimore, concelebrated with Archbishop Lori, who also acknowledged Bishop William C. Newman, auxiliary bishop emeritus of Baltimore, "who would like to be with us tonight, but is with us in spirit."

Jennelle Cyr, a parishioner of St. Ignatius of Loyola in Ijamsville and wife of Deacon James Cyr, who serves at St. Ignatius, said that watching her husband join seminarians, priests and bishops in the opening procession was "humbling."

"When they are becoming deacons, they are asked the question, 'Are you worthy?'" she said. "How are you ever worthy of that? It's not something my husband chose; it was chosen for him. ... It's just very humbling that God would choose us to be his arms and legs and voice to speak to his people."

Watch a video of the Chrism Mass [here](#).

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