

Homily - Chrism Mass

We remember in this Mass our sick priests, Father Joseph McManus, Pastor Emeritus of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, Baltimore, and Father John Carter, who recently underwent major surgery at St. Joseph's Hospital, and is now convalescing at the home of his sister and brother-in-law; and let us pray for Monsignor Arthur Valenzano, very ill with leukemia in a hospital in Rome, where he had gone on a sabbatical program. I spoke with him Saturday morning. His spirits were good, and better for knowing about the many prayers offered for him here. We remember them in our prayers at this Eucharist, as we remember all the sick in the Archdiocese.

Es una gran alegría estar hoy aquí con ustedes en esta ocasión importante de nuestra peregrinación hacia la Pascua de Resurrección. En unos momentos, los oleos que se usan al conferir los Sacramentos serán bendecidos solemnemente aquí: el Bautismo, la Confirmación y las Ordenes Sacerdotales son eventos claves en la vida de la Iglesia, otorgando a aquellos que los reciben el poder de actuar como Jesús deseara que nosotros actuáramos, imitándole a Él. De una manera especial les invito a orar conmigo para que el Señor suscite vocaciones al sacerdocio y a la vida consagrada para el bien de la vida futura de la Iglesia. Quiera Dios que los oleos que se llevan fuera de esta iglesia esta noche, sean signos de una vida renovada y vigorosa en unidad con Jesús, el Divino Maestro.

We are refreshed and buoyed up by the readings we hear this evening. The prophet Isaiah offered a variety of images to conjure up a sense of a real break with the past history of his people. He announced in the synagogue of his home town of Nazareth an anointing of God which would enable him to bring to the poor the good news of redemption, and to proclaim to those who were captive to sin a new freedom. Those who were blind would be given sight to help them see in new dimensions the possibilities of an inner spiritual life. Those oppressed in so many ways, whether by culture or as the result of evil will, will be given freedom, and a year of jubilee will be proclaimed.

For all of these intentions we pray tonight, as we prepare to bless the holy oils and to listen to the recommitment of those who lead and serve us.

Once again this year our young people reminded us of so vividly of what Pope Benedict said in his homily at the Mass inaugurating his service as pope: "The Church is alive! The Church is young!" On Saturday morning they prayed in silence before the Holy Eucharist at St. Mary's, Govans. I invited them to reflect on how they might speak to Jesus, and also listen for his response. Then, in a steady rain, in the company of our three vicar bishops, they set forth.

Some took turns carrying a replica of our World Youth Day cross, an exact copy of the cross given Sunday, by the Holy Father, to young people from Australia, in preparation for their own celebration of World Youth Day. Our young people visited the College of Notre Dame, where they continued to pray at various stations and then the Rosary in small groups. I joined them there for a sandwich and a bottle of water. We enjoyed visiting with each other, and I was delighted that so many wanted to have a photo to recall the evening.

We then walked up the hill to the Cathedral.

Here at the Cathedral, the ceremony for the blessing of palms took place, followed by the Mass for Palm Sunday. The Loyola College Chapel choir, directed by Dr. George Miller, surrounded our liturgy with lovely music.

It was a special joy to invite the young people to consider the challenge of possible vocations to the priesthood and the consecrated life. Father Jerry Francik, the Vocations Office Director, was along to answer any immediate questions.

Al finalizar la homilía, invité a los jóvenes a que pensaran en la posibilidad de que quizás Jesús les estuviera llamando a considerar una vocación al sacerdocio ó a la vida