

On Monday, March 21, the beginning of Holy Week, St Patrick's Cathedral Ballarat was filled with priests and people from around the Diocese for the Mass of the Oils. This Mass is very special to our Diocese as it is the annual celebration of the Diocesan Church of Ballarat. The gathering celebrates the unity of the Diocese where priests, religious and laity renew their commitment to call to serve in Christ's name as baptised members of his Church and sharers in his mission. The Holy Oils were blessed and consecrated and were distributed to all the communities of our Diocese for the celebration of the Sacraments.

The Oils – Oil of the Sick, Oil of Baptism and the Holy Chrism - will reach those in our Diocese who become sick and are anointed; every baby in our Diocese who is baptised; every young person and adult in our Diocese who are fully initiated into the community of the Church.

Concelebrants for the Mass were priests celebrating a Jubilee this year: Frs Dan Arundell (60 years), Damian Heath (60 years), Kevin Condon (60 years), Denis Ryan (30 years), Shane Mackinlay (25 years) and Matthew Thomas (10 years). They joined Bishop Paul Bird CSsR (Main Celebrant), Bishop Peter Connors and Fr Justin Driscoll VG at the altar.

Members of the diocese fulfilling ministries at the Mass this year were:

Oil of the Sick Procession:

Michael Myers – Diocesan Professional Standards Co-ordinator
Noel Gregory – Member of the Diocesan Social Justice Commission
Bernadette O'Donnell – St Mary's Parish, Birchip
Malcolm Burns – Exodus Community, Wendouree West
Flagon: Brian Lynch: Project Officer: Principal Wellbeing, Catholic Education Office

Oil of Catechumen Procession:

Stacey McKercher – Catechumen: St Patrick's Parish, Gordon
Keran Mewett – Catechumen: St Alipius' Parish, Ballarat East
Br Bernie Adams – Sponsor: St Mary's Parish, Colac
Rebecca Smits - Catechumen: St Patrick's Parish, Gordon
Flagon: Caitee Andrew - World Youth Day Poland 2016 Diocesan Pilgrim



Oil of Chrism Procession:

Judith O’Sullivan – Pastoral Leader: St Columba’s Parish, Ballarat North

Tanya Kehoe – Campus Ministry, Australian Catholic University Ballarat

Daniel Ross-Smith – Candidate: St Patrick’s Cathedral, Ballarat

Louisa Godbold – Sponsor: St Columba’s Parish, Ballarat North

Flagon: Fr Dan Arundell – Jubilarian: Ordination to the Priesthood

Perfume: Cameron Jenkins: Confirmation Candidate: St Michael’s Parish, Bungaree

First Reading:

Mr Frank Stuart - St Patrick’s Cathedral Parish, Ballarat:

Second Reading:

Sr Kathleen Moran RSM - Sisters of Mercy

Gospel Procession:

Anthea Hinchey – Sponsor: St Columba’s Parish, Ballarat North

Presentation of the Gifts:

Marg Allan and Liz McGuane - St Brendan’s Parish, Cororooke

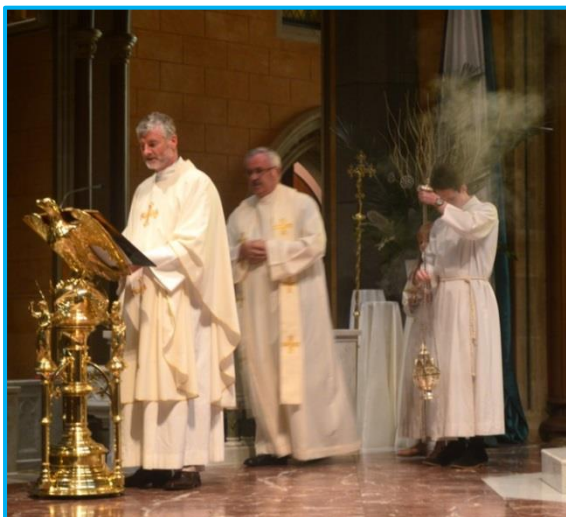
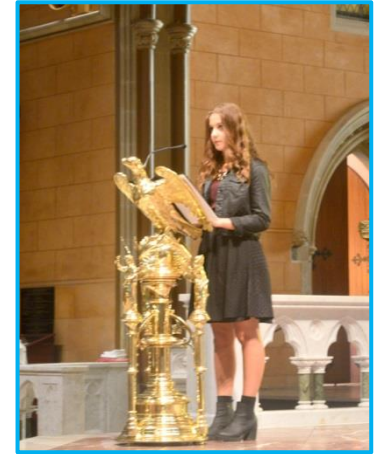
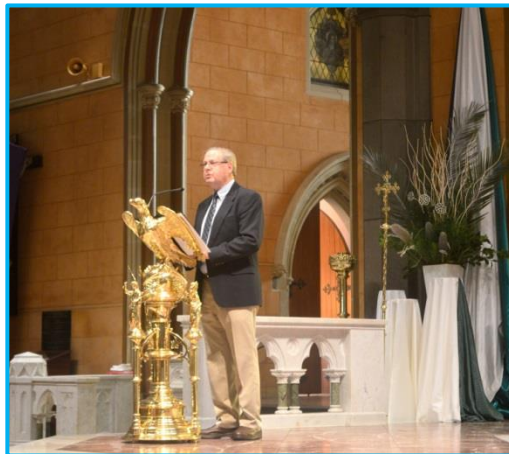
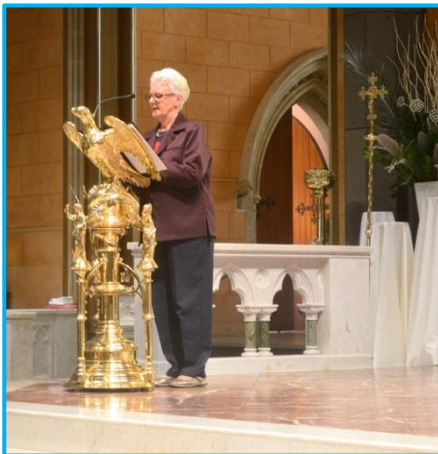
The music was beautifully led by Choir Conductor Dr Roger Hillman, Organist Mr Geoff Martin, Flautist Mr Adrian Newman and choir members from the Cathedral and surrounding parishes. The Cantor for the evening was Chiara Angeli, a student at Damascus College Ballarat, who performed a beautiful rendition of the psalm.

Before the final blessing, Anne Eskdale from the Diocesan Pastoral Council called representatives of the parishes of the Diocese forward to collect the Oils for their parish. These Oils will then be received in the parishes at Mass on Holy Thursday evening.

There are many people involved in the success of this Mass and thanks is extended to those who prepared the oils, participated in the various ministries, collected the Oils for their parishes, the Altar Servers, welcomers, ushers, those responsible for the décor in the Cathedral, Sally Morris for catering and members of the Diocesan Liturgical Commission.

Following Mass, all gathered in St Patrick’s Hall for supper.

Bishop Paul Bird’s Homily can be read below.





Photos:

1. Processing in
2. Bishop Paul, Bishop Peter, Fr Justin and Jubilarians concelebrating Mass
3. Brian Lynch presenting the Oil of the Sick
4. Fr Dan Arundell and Cameron Jenkins presenting the Oil of Catechumen
5. Sr Kathleen Moran
6. Frank Stewart
7. Chiara Angeli
8. Fr Shane Mackinlay, Fr Gary Jones and Tom Simpson
9. Bishop Paul and Priests
10. Laity renewing commitment
11. Religious renewing commitment
12. Receiving Eucharist
13. Fr Dan Arundell and Cameron Jenkins
14. Parish representatives collecting oils for their parishes

As you may recall, Pope Francis has nominated this year as a holy year, a jubilee. When he announced this special year, he spoke of his hopes that this would be a time when we would come to know more vividly the great mercy of God and a time when we would learn to be merciful to one another. He chose as the theme for this year a verse from the gospel of Luke: "Be merciful just as your Father is merciful."

In the document introducing the holy year, Pope Francis quoted words spoken by Pope John XXIII at the opening of the Second Vatican Council in 1962. They are words very much in tune with Pope Francis' emphasis on mercy. Pope John said that the Church "wishes to use the medicine of mercy rather than taking up arms of severity . . . The Catholic Church, as she holds high the torch of Catholic truth at this Ecumenical Council, wants to show herself a loving mother to all; patient, kind, moved by compassion and goodness."

Pope Francis also quoted words spoken by Pope Paul VI at the close of the Council in 1965. Pope Paul said: "The principal religious feature of this Council has been charity . . . the story of the Good Samaritan has been the model for the Council's spirituality." The Good Samaritan was the one who was moved with pity when he saw a man who had been beaten lying by the side of the road. He poured soothing oil on the man's wounds and then he took him to an inn and looked after him. Pope Paul said that the Council had drawn inspiration from this story and had sought to be sensitive to the needs of people in the modern world and offer encouraging remedies to meet those needs.

Pope Francis has reaffirmed this approach of the Council for our own times. He has encouraged us to be sensitive to the needs of people today and to respond to those needs with kindness.

This is very much in tune with the theme of this holy year – the theme of mercy. It is also very much in tune with our celebration this evening – the blessing of the holy oils. Anointing with oil is a beautiful symbol of mercy being poured out to sooth the wounds of the world.

In this evening's gospel, anointing is linked with the outpouring of the spirit of God. Jesus reads from the prophet Isaiah: "The spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for he has anointed me." And the anointing of the spirit is to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, new sight to the blind, to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim the Lord's year of favour.

As we celebrate this Jubilee Year, we are called anew to follow Christ in serving the poor and all those we meet who are in need. We are called to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord, a year of mercy.

The oils we bless this evening are symbols of this mercy. The Oil of the Sick, a symbol of the Spirit of Healing for those who are suffering. The Oil of Catechumens, a symbol of the Spirit of Strength for those preparing for baptism. The Oil of Chrism, used in Confirmation and Ordination, a symbol of the Spirit forming us to be more like Christ.

May our prayer this evening bring a blessing on these oils and a blessing on all who will be anointed in the year ahead. May our prayer also bring a blessing on us in our various ministries. In all the services we provide, may we offer the soothing oil of God's mercy.

Bishop Paul Bird CSSR