

**MASS OF THE HOLY OILS**  
**ST PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL, BALLARAT**  
**31<sup>ST</sup> MARCH 2026**

***Sharers in Christ's Anointing***

*(Isaiah 61:1-3,6,8-9; Psalm 88; Apocalypse 1:5-8; Luke 4:16-21)*

I was baptised exactly two weeks after I was born. My young parents, still in their twenties presented their third child to the parish priest at 3.00pm on Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> September 1959. Two other families were also presenting their newly born infants for baptism. During that ceremony I was anointed with the Oil of Catechumens and with the Chrism, which together with the Oil of the Sick, would have been blessed by the Archbishop of Hobart during the Holy Week ceremonies earlier that year.

My mother often recalled that the parish priest got impatient with her because she fumbled when trying to undo my vest so I could be anointed with the Oil of Catechumens. It just goes to show that the impatience or irritation of priests doesn't affect the power and effectiveness of God's anointing!

During my life I have been anointed with the Oil of Catechumens only that one time. On a handful of occasions have I received the Anointing of the Sick. Four times I have been anointed with the Sacred Chrism: on my forehead at my Baptism and when I was Confirmed, on my hands at my Ordination to ministerial priesthood, and (well and truly, I might say) on my head last week at the Episcopal Ordination.

As we gather to renew our commitment as the priestly people of God: laity, religious, priests and bishops, and as we bless the oils for sacramental anointing throughout our local Church, I invite you to ponder your own anointings, both sacramentally and in the many ways you have received anointing in Christ, through the service of others. I also invite you to be confident about the many ways you have brought Christ's anointing to others.

We use oils and ointments all the time, to heal, to protect and to strengthen. We use the oils we are about to bless to heal, to protect and to strengthen in the name of Christ. We are sharers in Christ's anointing and, in a few moments, we are going to commit ourselves anew to share this anointing with all our sisters and brothers – not simply with the sacramental use of the

oils, but also as we share ourselves in the service of all people. As we have been anointed in Christ, so each of us is missioned to anoint in the name of Christ and to make known the fullness of life that is God's desire for us.

We are gathered here in the Cathedral and throughout the diocese via livestream as the priestly people of God. By taking up the scroll of the prophet Isaiah when he went to the synagogue in Nazara, where he had been brought up, Jesus teaches us what it means to be a priestly people. By virtue of our baptism, incorporated into Christ by the anointing of the Holy Spirit, we, each one of us, are called and commissioned to *bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim the Lord's year of favour (Luke 4:18-19)*.

So how do we do this? In a sense, more of the same. More of the same courage, generosity and compassion with which you have already imitated Christ in all the different ways you have given of yourselves in serving your neighbour, especially those who are in need. But as we renew our commitment, we pray that the Spirit of the Lord will deepen the anointing, so that even more, we will, like Jesus our Christ, pour out our lives for others so that all may have life and have it to the full (*cf. John 10:10*).

It matters not whether we are lay faithful or consecrated religious or ministerial priests or bishops. What matters is that we are all sharers in Christ's anointing, and we are all called to give of ourselves as an anointing in the name of Christ Jesus!

Renewed in this anointing and renewing this anointing as we live out our particular vocations with faithfulness and love, we know the healing, protection and strengthening we need to celebrate the mysteries of our faith in the days ahead, and to live fully this anointing as we continue to journey together as the priestly people of God in the diocese of Ballarat.

*To our Christ, then, be glory and power for ever and ever. Amen!*  
(*Apocalypse 1:6*)