

Homily
Chrism Mass
Diocese of Des Moines
March 23, 2018

“You yourselves shall be named priests of the LORD Ministers of our God you shall be called.”

We are God’s people, God’s holy people. Together as God’s flock we take on the priesthood identity. For those of us already graced with God’s priesthood through baptism and confirmation tonight will hopefully be one that moisturizes the Chrism already applied. May we be strongly committed to whom we are, living the Christian life more intensely. In turn, the Chrism consecrated this evening will anoint those who will be baptized and confirmed this year, the diocesan candidate for ministerial priesthood as priest and perhaps a new bishop.

As priestly people, we take on three specific roles. The first is **cultic** or the offering of sacrifice.

In this priestly identity we are immensely privileged to be one with Jesus, as the everlasting sacrifice of his death is made present every time we celebrate Mass through the instrumentality of the ordained priest.

In the Second Eucharistic prayer, immediately after the priest calls down the powerful Holy Spirit to change the bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus, the priest prays:”

“Therefore as **we celebrate** the memorial of his death and resurrection, **we offer**, you Lord, the bread of life and chalice of salvation, giving thanks that you have held us worthy to be in your presence and minster to you.”

With the words **we celebrate** and **we offer** the priestly people, all of us, are elevated from passive spectators to active participants in the very action by which our salvation is won. Think what a privilege, what an awesome moment this is . . . and therefore the high importance we should attach to being engaged in the divine act by which we are restored to God’s friendship.

The second dimension which is attributed to us as priestly members of God’s kingdom is the regal, kingly role. Regal is better understood as the role of shepherd. Each of us is deputized to reach out to all in God’s family with tender and loving care. Pope Francis oftentimes speaks of this reality as a field hospital. So many of our brothers and sisters worldwide, are victims of war, of natural disasters, of human cruelty. As members of God’s flock they are deserving of our outreach, compassion, our tender care.

Another factor needing attention in our contemporary culture is the wandering of significant numbers of God’s flock from His Body, the Church. They are categorized as “nones” the fastest growing segment of religious choice. They belong to no religious organization. But, in actuality, they are our family members. They are our friends, our neighbors, our co-workers. A substantial number of the nones belong to the millennial generation, those aged 18-35.

Reflecting on this phenomenon, we as conscientious shepherds, respond in what is the New Moment. Pope Francis has coined the phrase Missionary Disciple, to envision our response. Accompanying Jesus in the episodes of the Gospel, we become one in mind and heart with him. We are his followers, his disciples who embrace both absorption of his teaching and personal relationship with him. The word that is most frequently used in the scriptures is go. Thus, we are disciples sent to bring the good news through example and speech to those with whom we daily associate.

The third priestly characteristic that we experience is that of prophet. In both Isaiah and Luke the expectation is ever so clear:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me 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.”

In a world so polarized by politics whether democrat or republican, divided by media seeking patrons the likes of Fox News or CNN, or separated on the basis of the world's goods – rich v. poor, we recognize that our independent, courageous and prophetic voice is needed more than ever.

As Pope Francis repeatedly challenges us, our voices of advocacy as God's priestly, prophetic people are called upon to speak on behalf of the poor, of creation, of refugees and immigrants, of

victims of war, of those suffering religious and political persecution, of the victims of unnecessary gun violence.

Tonight, seated to my left and in front of me are ordained priests, who have responded to the personal vocation by which they stand in the words of Vatican II “in the place of Christ.” In this capacity, they serve, lead, inspire us, God’s holy people, to live up to our priestly identity. We thank them for their invaluable ministry which they render with joy and sacrifice.

At this point, they will renew their sacerdotal commitment with their brother priests. Hopefully, it will stimulate the chrism on their anointed hands and reactivate their initial fervor and seal ever more firmly their commitment as our servants.