

# Homily of Archbishop Leo Cushley of St Andrews & Edinburgh

Chrism Mass, St Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh, 24 July 2020

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Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

It seemed fitting that our first post Covid-19 Mass in public, at least for the Bishop, should be the celebration of the Chrism Mass.

This event is no mere formality or detail: it is something that is profoundly important in the yearly cycle of events in the life of the local church. It is the moment when we do two very important things.

First of all, by ancient tradition, we consecrate the three holy oils, in particular the sacred Chrism which we use at Confirmations and Ordinations to signify the Gift of the Holy Spirit bestowed upon us through the hands of the bishops as successors of the Apostles.

Normally, this would be completed prior to the celebration of the Easter Vigil and the reception of new Christians into the mystical body of Christ. This year, due to well-known circumstances beyond our control, we were unable either to consecrate the oils or to welcome new Christians into our midst.

Now, however, that we are at liberty to celebrate Mass in public, the time has come for us to make the preparations that we need to welcome new Christians into our midst. One of the means by which we do that is through the holy oils that will be consecrated this morning. That is why I have asked the Deans to be present in order to take a suitable amount of each of the three oils back with them to each Deanery, so that the initiation of Christians can begin as soon as possible.

The second significant thing that we do at the Chrism Mass, since the Second Vatican Council, is to renew the priestly promises of the presbyterate present in each diocese. This too was postponed because of the lack of a Chrism Mass, but today we will hold that renewal of promises shortly.

Again, I am assisted by the Deans who will represent all the clergy throughout the Archdiocese, as this seems to be the most sensible and practical way to have all the priests represented. Due to the restrictions placed upon numbers at public worship, and for obvious reasons of not wishing to increase the risk of the spread of COVID-19, it seemed better to invite a small number of clergy to represent everyone.

That is why I have also asked all the clergy today to take the renewal of promises that are found in the Roman Missal and to bring them to their morning prayer today. The renewal of the priestly promises is a token, of course, but it is an important one of the willingness of the clergy to be steadfast in their priestly promises, and therefore has become an important

moment very close to our hearts. That is why, again, it seemed important to me that we celebrate the Chrism Mass as soon as it was practically possible.

My thoughts and prayers go to the priests who cannot be present and who will miss the Chrism Mass, some of them for the very first time in their priesthood. More than ever, in this particular circumstance, we feel paradoxically the bonds between us even more strongly, as they are, at the end of the day, a profound spiritual bond which transcends time and space.

Just as our Eucharistic abstinence over these last four months has intensified our appreciation of the Eucharist and of our Lord's presence among us by that means, so the unique way by which all the priests in the Archdiocese will renew their priestly promises today is a poignant reminder of the crucial nature of the spiritual communion that we all share as priests with each other, and with our great high priest, Jesus Christ.

I hope that this year, as it has in so many ways, will become not so much a non-event or a blank in our diaries, as an opportunity to deepen our faith and to appreciate what it truly means for us all.

My dear people, we priests are sinners; we are unworthy to be at your service, but by your prayers and support, we resolved today to serve you ever more faithfully. So please pray for your priests, and pray for me, that we may be good and holy ministers of the Word and of the Eucharist on your behalf.

God bless you all and God bless our Archdiocese in these strange times.