July 3, 2022—14th Sunday in Ordinary Time

In the baptismal ceremony, just before the priest or deacon anoints the crown of the head with the oil of holy Chrism, he says, “**As Christ was anointed Priest, Prophet, and King so may you live always as a member of His Body, sharing everlasting life.**” The anointing at baptism reminds us that we have become a member of God’s priestly people through Baptism. In both the old and new Testaments, priests were anointed with this fragrant oil. When I was ordained a priest, the archbishop made a cross with the oil of Chrism upon the palms of my hands. My hands were anointed to consecrate the Holy Eucharist, to forgive sins and to bless.

There are two forms of priesthood in the new covenant, the Church: the priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial priesthood. The CCC teaches that “**the common priesthood of the faithful is exercised by the unfolding of baptismal grace—a life of faith, hope and charity, a life according to the Spirit”** (#1547). The role of a priest is to offer sacrifice to God. It is living out your Christian vocation in your family and daily work that you fulfill your baptismal priesthood. It is by participating in the Holy Mass and offering your prayers, works, sufferings and thanksgiving to God in union with the Eucharistic Sacrifice that you act as a member of God’s priestly people. You bring your life to Holy Mass as a sacrificial offering to God.

In the Gospel this Sunday, Jesus sent the 72 disciples who, after the 12 apostles, were His first missionaries. He said, “**The harvest is abundant, but the laborers are few; so, ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest**.” They were to go out and proclaim, “**the Kingdom of God is at hand for you**”; they returned with great success. The harvest of souls is just as great today; many need to hear the message of Jesus for the first time, but many have lost their faith and need to hear it again and receive grace through the sacraments to be reconciled with God. We need many priests to bring the Good News of the Gospel through preaching and through the sacraments.

We must be grateful to God that in the short history of our parish we will soon have two sons of the parish ordained priests: Father Truss, a year ago, and next May, Deacon Jacob Wessel will be ordained to the priesthood. We must keep praying for vocations to the priesthood as Jesus asked us in the Gospel.

The CCC reminds us that “**the ministerial priesthood is at the service of the common priesthood. It is directed at the unfolding of the baptismal grace of all Christians**” (1547). When I first received my call to the priesthood and entered the seminary, I had a very simple understanding of my future role as a priest—to bring people to God and God to people. Although I think I have grown in my understanding of what that means, the idea is that a priest is at the service of the People of God, along with his service to God. I have tried to live my life with that idea in mind.

Fortunately for me, you mostly see me up here in Church in my vestments speaking about holy things and you don’t necessarily see my faults. Boys or young men who are thinking about a vocation might think that they could never be a priest because they have their faults and weaknesses and struggles with sin. The CCC points out, “**The presence of Christ in the minister is not to be understood as if [he] were preserved from all human weaknesses, the spirit of domination, error, even sin.**” It goes on to say, “**while [the Holy Spirit’s] guarantee extends to the sacraments, so that even the minister’s sin cannot impede the fruit of grace, in many other acts the minister leaves human traces that are not always signs of fidelity to the Gospel**” (#1550). The sacraments give grace with or in spite of the priest, but he is not guaranteed holiness, he must work out his salvation like every other Christian. Don’t be afraid to seek a vocation to the priesthood because you are a sinner, we all are!

There is no greater joy for me as a priest than to be able to serve you and bring you the sacraments and the Word of God. You are part of a very large family; you call me Father; a spiritual father and I am so grateful to you for your love and support. Every day I am privileged to forgive sins in the name of Jesus and bring people His healing mercy in Confession; I am blessed to be able to mount the steps to the altar and offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass that renews Calvary and feeds our souls with Jesus, truly Present. I have been a priest long enough to have baptized a baby, witnessed their marriage and baptized their children. I have seen many lives changed and blessed by the grace of God who were facing death and needed the priest to be there at that moment with the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick. Yes, there are challenges in every life, but God has given me the most fulfilling and challenging and joyful life as a priest of Jesus Christ.

Mary, Mother of priests, pray that our priests may be strong in faith and grant us many more priests who will live in accord with the Heart of Jesus, your Son.