

## **Chrism Mass 2018 Homily**

**Most Reverend John O. Barres, STD, JCL**

**Bishop of Rockville Centre (Long Island, New York)**

**Thursday, March 29, 2018**

This morning we celebrate our Holy Week Chrism Mass 2018 and together we pray for *dramatic missionary growth* in the Church of Rockville Centre and beyond.

Let me begin by thanking all our priests today. You are an inspiration to each other in the solidarity of your fraternity. You are an inspiration to your people. And you are an inspiration to me, our beloved Bishop Murphy, Bishop Brennan, Bishop Andrzej, Bishop Dunne and Bishop Wcela.

Thank you for living out the Chrism Mass homily that Pope Francis preached earlier today when he asked priests all over the world to be close to God by being close to our people in spiritual conversation and accompaniment, close to our people in confession and close to our people in our preaching.

Today at this Chrism Mass we welcome home Bishop Robert Coyle, our new auxiliary Bishop, a gift to the Church of Long Island from Pope Francis. As you know, Bishop Coyle has served with Archbishop Timothy Broglio in a global ministry of pastoral charity and service to our brothers and sisters in the Military.

Bishop Coyle we thank you for your dedication to the Church and to our nation and we look forward to your pastoral missionary presence among us. Please join me in welcoming home Bishop Robert Coyle.

We are also deeply grateful for the presence today of Msgr. Richard Marchese, Secretary to the Papal Nuncio, Archbishop Christophe Pierre, who will be reading the Decree of Appointment of Bishop Coyle. Please join me in thanking Msgr. Marchese for his presence today.

The Chrism Mass is a time to honor our priest jubilarians who celebrate priestly milestones and give thanks to God for the graces experienced in their faithful

living of the priesthood. We give thanks too for our newly ordained and incardinated priests.

The Chrism Mass offers us the opportunity to pray for the souls of Bishop Kellenberg, Bishop McGann, Bishop McHugh and the souls of all the deceased auxiliary bishops and priests who have served in the Diocese of Rockville Centre since 1957 and those who served the Church on Long Island before the founding of the Diocese.

We remember in a special way at this Mass the priests who have died since our last Chrism Mass in 2017.

I want to thank all of our permanent deacons, both active and retired, their wives and their families who are serving our parishes with a great spirit of prayer and missionary dedication.

We also pray for the souls of permanent deacons and their wives and family members who have died and in a special way for those deacons and their family members who have died since our last Chrism Mass.

Today, as a presbyterate, we renew the promises of our commitment to the priesthood and the Holy Spirit breathes through the oils we use to celebrate the sacraments.

Together, as a presbyterate we celebrate with the people we serve the signs of our times, the signs of opportunity for *dramatic missionary growth* and its relationship to the priesthood of Jesus Christ.

What are some of these signs?

**Sign of the Times #1: The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Assassination of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**

On April 4, 2018 in the Easter Octave, we will commemorate here at St. Agnes Cathedral the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the tragic day of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination in Memphis. "We commemorate one sacred life, laid down as a witness to our fundamental equality as brothers and sisters in Christ. Dr. King's sacrifice tipped the scales of human history and brought us closer to the fulfillment of a dream, one that recognizes the dignity of men and women of all races, one that

recognizes that the sanctity of human life is the foundation of every other human right and one that recognizes the rich contributions and legacy of African Americans in our country as well as the need to move comprehensive immigration reform forward.”<sup>1</sup>

We remember the Catholic priests, nuns and lay people who walked with Dr. King in Selma and who celebrated his dream in front of the Lincoln monument in Washington DC.

We remember today that the Catholic priest has a unique role and obligation to promote racial harmony and peace, and to welcome and support the stranger.

It is a role that we need to continue to embrace and be vigilant about in a nation that carries centuries of wounds.

Thank you my brothers in the priesthood for the way you help heal these wounds and the way you carry Dr. King’s dream into the future in your service to your parishioners and in your service to all of humanity.

### **Sign of the Times #2: Pope Francis’ Announcement of the Canonization of Blessed Archbishop Oscar Romero**

Pope Francis recently announced the canonization of Blessed Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero. What a moment to celebrate for the Church and for the entire world.

At last year’s Chrism Mass, I said that one of the finest hours of the priesthood in the Diocese of Rockville Centre has been the commitment of our priests in our parishes to welcoming the stranger, and celebrating their leadership and their gifts to the Church’s mission. I repeat that sentiment today.

Last August, the Catholic Church on Long Island hosted Cardinal Gregorio Rosa Chavez, an auxiliary bishop in El Salvador who was made a Cardinal by Pope Francis in June 2017.

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<sup>1</sup> Bishop John Barres’ *The Dream and Our Deepest, Truest Selves: Commemorating the life and mission of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his assassination*, March 2018 *Long Island Catholic*.

Cardinal Rosa Chavez was a close friend of Archbishop Blessed Oscar Romero, who was martyred while celebrating Mass because he told soldiers to refuse to participate in torture and murder.

It was while offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass that Blessed Oscar Romero made the holy sacrifice of his life for Christ, the Church's mission and the People of God of that moment and every subsequent moment in Church history.

With Cardinal Rosa Chavez, we, the Church on Long Island, made an appeal for comprehensive immigration reform in this country and globally, grounding that appeal in the principles of the dignity of the human person, the sanctity of all human life and the family, and Catholic Social Justice teaching concerning our belief in a preferential option for the poor.

We made an appeal to gang members on Long Island, and gang members from Los Angeles to New York to reject the Culture of Death and embrace the Culture of Life.

We also commemorated the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the birth of Archbishop Romero, and prayed for his canonization – prayers that have born fruit in such a short time.

We celebrated the missionary zeal of the Fifth Encuentro, and Cardinal Chavez along with Fr. Danny Rivera and Seminarian Roger Velasquez together made an impassioned appeal for a rich harvest of new vocations to the priesthood from our beautiful Hispanic community on Long Island.

Archbishop Romero once said: “The most profound social revolution is the serious, supernatural, interior reform of a Christian.”

And here we return to the Sacrament of Penance and our annual experience of *Reconciliation Monday* earlier in Holy Week.

Blessed Oscar Romero has been embraced as an ecumenical, interfaith and humanitarian figure of inspiration who is known for his courage, his humanity, his defense of human rights, his commitment to overcome violence with Gospel mercy and peace, and his solidarity with the poor.

What is often forgotten is that Oscar Romero was a deeply humble man and priest who was profoundly committed to the Sacrament of Penance in his personal life and who promoted it zealously among the people he served.

Blessed Oscar Romero understood both the power of conversion in the Sacrament of Penance and how conversions experienced in the Sacrament of Penance could help lead to social change.

Today as a presbyterate as we honor the memory of Archbishop Romero, we connect our experiences of the Sacrament of Penance as both penitents and confessors with every dimension of social change – whether it is our witness to the civil rights of the unborn and the religious liberty rights of all Americans in Albany and Washington, or our constant witness as a Church to the dignity of the human person in every context.<sup>2</sup>

### **Sign of the Times #3: Pope Francis announces the Canonization of Blessed Pope Paul VI**

Pope Francis recently announced the canonization of Blessed Pope Paul VI. Together today we celebrate the rich panorama of his witness and Pontificate from his leadership at the Second Vatican Council to his emphasis on Third World development in *Populorum Progressio* (1967) to his vision of *dramatic missionary growth* in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975).

Last fall we dedicated the Gianna Center of Long Island for Women’s Health and Fertility, which in its mission unites the Splendor of Truth of Catholic Moral Teaching on Marriage and the Family with ethical reproductive science through the use of *NaPro Technology* and the *Creighton Model Fertility Care System*.

This was an important moment for the Catholic Church and Catholic Health Services in its service to the common good of Long Island.

The work of the Gianna Center gives a living expression of celebration to some important 2018 Church anniversaries.

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Bishop John Barres’ St. John’s University Founder’s Week Convocation Keynote Address entitled “The Relationship between Catholic Sacramental Theology and Catholic Social Justice Teaching: The Sacrament of Penance in Service of ‘Welcoming the Stranger’” in the January 2018 edition of *The Long Island Catholic*.

On July 25, 2018, we will celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Blessed Pope Paul VI's 1968 encyclical *Humanae Vitae*. Blessed Paul VI was prophetic as he courageously taught that all marital intimacy celebrates the profound and inseparable unity of the love-giving and life-giving dimensions of married love.

The Holy Father predicted accurately the dire consequences for society – including the mistreatment and harassment of women and a blindness to their feminine genius -- of separating the love-giving and life-giving dimensions of married love.

He was widely criticized even ridiculed at the time. Msgr. Jim Vlaun even remembers as a boy first hearing about Pope Paul VI's *Humanae Vitae* as the punch line of a *Rowan and Martin Laugh In* joke.

We know from the Old Testament and from the life of our Lord himself, that is exactly what happens to prophets in history who stand up for liberating truths.

As Catholic priests, we follow in Blessed Pope Paul VI's footsteps as we meet people with the Divine Mercy where they are in the real problems of life, the tensions and challenges families face and with pastoral charity and pastoral artistry gently help lead them to the objective truths of the moral life that set them free.

By that gentle, merciful and strong priestly artistry, we *accompany* them in truth, mercy and charity to salvation.

Blessed John Henry Cardinal Newman once said: “The Catholic Church is not behind the times. It is beyond the times.” And as the renowned particle physicist Professor Stephen Barr emphasizes, in the history of the world, the Catholic Church is the greatest friend and supporter of *ethical* scientific development. The Gianna Center is an expression of this friendship, support and partnership in history.

On August 6, 2018, we will also celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of St. John Paul II's great encyclical *The Splendor of Truth*, which shows that moral choices and decisions that are grounded in objective truth transform and illumine the lives of individuals and society.

Our steadfast commitment to these truths in our pastoral lives and in the public square is a critical dimension of defeating the moral atrocities of history perpetrated by what Pope Benedict XVI called “the dictatorship of relativism.”

The Gianna Center is a powerful and living expression of the Splendor of Truth.

The Center’s patroness, St. Gianna Beretta Molla (1922-1962) was a wife, a mother and a physician dedicated to the progress of ethical medical science. Her image is prominent here in St. Agnes Cathedral where we celebrate this Chrism Mass today.

We pray that her intercession and her courageous and holy example may inspire each one of us in our priestly ministries and the families we serve in our parishes.<sup>3</sup>

#### **Sign of the Times #4: The Establishment of a New Museum at the National Shrine of St. John Neumann in Philadelphia**

The Redemptorists are establishing a new museum at the National Shrine of Saint John Neumann devoted to telling the story of St. John Neumann’s extraordinary life and cause for sainthood.

St. John Neumann is a priestly icon of holiness and mission in the soil of the United States. He influenced many of our paths to the priesthood.

He calls the question of our own commitment to holiness, mission and conversion. He calls the question of our own approach to priestly fraternity and solidarity, and the unity of our presbyterate around the Bishop.

St. John Neumann is asking each of us today a number of questions.

Am I faithful to consistent spiritual direction in which I am honest, direct and sincere? Am I making frequent use of the Sacrament of Penance knowing that that consistency and dedication helps to make me a more compassionate and wiser confessor?

Am I faithful and totally invested in my annual retreat – taking it seriously, going to a serious retreat house and extending its impact as a point of reference for the rest of the liturgical year?

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Bishop John Barres’ December 2017 Christmas Letter.

Am I making the connection between silence, contemplative prayer and creativity and innovation in parish evangelization?

In *The Joy of the Gospel*, Pope Francis reminds us to be bold priest evangelizers. He writes: “A true missionary, who never ceases to be a disciple, knows that Jesus walks with him, speaks to him, breathes with him, works with him. He senses Jesus alive with him in the midst of the missionary enterprise. Unless we see him present at the heart of our missionary commitment, our enthusiasm soon wanes and we are no longer sure of what it is that we are handing on; we lack vigor and passion. A person who is not convinced, enthusiastic, certain and in love, will convince nobody.”(266)

Finally, am I truly open to the call of St. John Neumann in my life to be an American priest saint providentially called to serve Jesus Christ and the evangelizing mission of the Catholic Church at this unique moment of American history, Church history and World history?

### **Conclusion:**

Today at this Chrism Mass, we celebrate these signs of the times and open our eyes and hearts to them. We celebrate the movement of the Holy Spirit in our parishes. We celebrate the torrent of Divine Mercy that flows from the Sacred Oils we bless.

We remember our own call to holiness and mission as we renew our priestly promises together. We embrace our call to a humble paschal mystery kenosis as priests, a kenosis that helps kick start a new era of *dramatic missionary growth* on Long Island and beyond.