

## Clergy gather to celebrate founding of priesthood

Posted by [Alan Van Wormer](#) On 03/27/2018

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – Cardinal Donald Wuerl, archbishop of Washington celebrated the annual Chrism Mass on Monday night at the Cathedral of St. Matthew the Apostle. Concelebrating the Mass with the cardinal were Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, archbishop emeritus of Washington, Archbishop Christophe Pierre, the apostolic nuncio, Bishop Mario E. Dorsonville and Bishop Roy E. Campbell, Jr., auxiliary bishops of Washington, and over 150 priests from throughout the Archdiocese of Washington.

The special Mass, celebrated each year during Holy Week, commemorates the founding of the priesthood by Christ. During the Mass, the special oils used by all parishes in the archdiocese to administer the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Orders, and Anointing of the Sick during the upcoming year were presented and blessed. The priests also renewed the promises made at their ordination of their commitment to Christ, to his Church, and to priestly ministry during the Mass.

Jesus is “the great example, the fundamental example of what, today, we would call accompaniment,” Cardinal Wuerl stated as he began his homily. Just as in the Gospel, where Jesus announces the coming of the kingdom and then begins his public ministry, Cardinal Wuerl said priests also must proclaim Church teaching and help the faithful to truly live it out. “What follows is the effort to help all those who would hear him grasp, accept, understand and appropriate that message,” the cardinal said.

Cardinal Wuerl then asked: “How does Jesus go about doing that? What are the steps in this effort to convince others? What does our Lord do to make disciples?”

Through Jesus’ works, miracles, parables, and conversations, Jesus brings about conversion of souls, Cardinal Wuerl stated. Priests can do the same by following Jesus’ example.

“You and I can find in his actions the fleshing out of our pastoral ministry,” the cardinal said. “While the word ‘accompaniment’ is receiving fresh attention, it speaks to something that is ancient – even atavistic – in the life of the priesthood. It speaks to us of the quiet, persistent, unfailing, caring, walking with those entrusted to our care, to our pastoral ministry.”

The parish, Cardinal Wuerl said, is the place where these encounters take place. “The parish...is where the sacraments are administered, or where the sacred oils are applied, where the Eucharist in particular is celebrated...This is where we meet those entrusted to our care. This is where the theme of the New Evangelization takes place.”

The cardinal concluded by thanking the priests and asking them to recognize this great mission and renew their commitment to the priestly ministry. Following the homily, the priests of the archdiocese renewed their priestly promises made at their ordination. The Oil of the Sick (to anoint those who are ill), the Oil of Catechumens (to anoint those preparing for Baptism), and Holy Chrism (used in the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders) were then brought forward to the sanctuary, and presented to the cardinal where he blessed them in a tradition that dates back to the early Church. After the conclusion of the Mass, the cardinal greeted the bishops and priests of the archdiocese who were in attendance.

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