



## Mass of the Holy Oils

This year in the Diocese of Baker we celebrated the Chrism Mass in July, far later than its scheduled date in April. COVID-19 severed the perennial association with Holy Thursday for 2020.

For me, looking back at Holy Week these months later made our Lord's institution of the priesthood on Holy Thursday stand out, not only as a climactic Lenten event of Christian faith, but also as the culmination of the universal human vocation to worship God.

We human beings are designed to worship the One True God; the need to adore and praise and thank Him is built into our nature. But in our creaturely littleness and ignorance we cannot take the measure of our Creator. Left to ourselves, we know not what to say or what to do that will truly please Him. So in His great kindness the Father of Mercies gives us the Gift to give and the Word to speak – the acceptable sacrifice of His Beloved Son made accessible to us in the Mass and offered, as is “truly right and just,” for the salvation of the whole world.

But if there is to be sacrifice, there must be priests to offer it for the people. Therefore, Christ chooses men to devote their lives to His Sacrifice for the people and to help them make their way heavenward by the grace of the sacraments that pass through their consecrated hands.

For at the end of the day, the priest is the man of the Sacraments. Each pastor takes the three oils from the Chrism Mass in the Cathedral to his parish church. There in the year to come he will rub them prayerfully into the flesh of the faithful. On the chest of an infant the baptizing priest traces the sign of the Cross with the Oil of Catechumens, and with the Oil of the Sick he signs the forehead and hands of those in danger of death. The sweet fragrance of Sacred Chrism will anoint the crown of an infant's head at Baptism, a youth's forehead at Confirmation, the hands of a new priest at ordination, and a new bishop's head at his consecration.

The word “Christ” means “the Anointed One,” and from it comes the term “Christian.” When your priest comes back from the Chrism Mass, he will bring with him the wherewithal to keep you true to your name in the Lord.