

Holy Week-The Chrism Mass & the Easter Vigil-Paul Turner

The Mass of Chrism comes once a year to your cathedral . If you've never celebrated it, you're missing one of the most solemn and significant liturgies of our church. During the Mass, your bishop will bless the oil of catechumens, the oil of the sick and the oil of chrism. We use the first for adult catechumens and infants, the second for anointing the sick, and the sacred oil of chrism for baptism, confirmation, the ordination of priests, and the consecration of altars. All three are basically an olive oil. Bishops have blessed oil ever since the early church. Since the bishop is the only minister in the diocese who may consecrate chrism, this Mass highlights his ministry and our union with him. He will not baptize and confirm everyone in the parishes of the diocese, but he will be symbolically present in the chrism which the priests and deacons will use. In recent years, this Mass has also acknowledged the ministry of priests. It invites them to renew their commitment of service and to receive the prayers and support of the people. The Mass of Chrism gathers the faithful of the diocese at their mother church with their shepherd to prepare for celebrations of Christ in all our churches throughout the year.(Please consider coming to Sacred Heart Cathedral this Tuesday March 30 at 7:30pm for the Chrism Mass.)

The Easter Vigil is the most important Mass of the year. In the complete ranking of all Catholic Church celebrations, the Triduum occupies the top spot. The Triduum, which begins with Holy Thursday's Mass of the Lord's Supper, concludes on Easter, reaching its climax with the Easter Vigil. **If there is one Mass in which Catholics should make every effort to participate every year, it is the Easter Vigil.** If you attend church Easter Sunday morning but miss the Easter Vigil, you have missed the most important celebration of the year.

The Easter Vigil celebrates the resurrection of Christ and the commitment of believers. It has four parts. It begins with a service of light. The community gathers in darkness to hear that Christ is our light, shattering the darkness of sin. The next part of the Vigil is the Liturgy of the Word. We hear up to nine Scripture passages that tell the story of salvation, ending with the Gospel of the resurrection.

The third part is the liturgy of baptism. Some catechumens have already been listed among the elect, those chosen for baptism this year. They now come forward to be plunged into the waters of new birth. Anointed with chrism, they celebrate confirmation, receiving the strength of God's Spirit for the Christian life. Then the entire community renews its baptismal promises. Together we pledge our faith in the resurrection and promise to follow Christ more closely.

The Vigil culminates in the fourth part, the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The length of the celebration has sharpened our hunger for communion. Now the newly baptized will join us in the Eucharist for the very first time. At the Easter Vigil we recommit ourselves to our faith and rejoice with the newly baptized.

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Join us for this year's Easter Vigil on Saturday April 3 at Good Shepherd Chapel