

## Liturgy Matters: Chrism Mass is all systems go!

Image: As attached to email.

On Tuesday 12 April, I am looking forward to all roads once again leading to the Sacred Heart Cathedral for our annual celebration of the Chrism Mass beginning at 7.00pm.

At the Chrism Mass the faithful of the diocese gather with their Bishop to bless and consecrate the Sacred Oils to be used in the church's sacramental ministry in the coming year.

The Oil of the Sick  
The Oil of Catechumens  
The Oil of Chrism

In recent years we have missed these big diocesan experiences and that indescribable feeling that comes when the voice of the faithful fills the Cathedral almost lifting the roof. I love the smell of the Chrism that greets us when we enter the Cathedral. I love seeing people and catching up on life in our different parish communities.

The 2022 Chrism Mass is shaped not only by our 'New Normal' defined by COVID, but also by the absence of our Bishop, Bill Wright. He will be with us differently, because it is the whole Church that gathers for liturgy: the church on earth joined with the communion of saints.

I hope the following information helps you prepare to join in:

- We have an Event Management Plan in place:
  - **Everyone is welcome.** There is no capacity limit on churches. We are encouraged 'as far as practical' to maintain some social distance.
  - While there is no requirement to wear a **mask**, given the numbers we hope will gather, we suggest you consider doing so.
  - **Hand sanitiser** and some masks will be available in the foyer of the Cathedral.
  - It is for you to decide if you will attend. Please do not come if you have any symptoms or are feeling unwell.
- A Bishop is required to preside at the Chrism Mass. Only a Bishop can consecrate the Oil of Chrism. **Bishop Danny Meagher**, the recently ordained Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Sydney has accepted Fr Greg Barker's invitation to preside at our celebration.
- This week, **parishes** will receive the usual communication asking for the quantity of each Sacred Oil needed. Parishes will also be asked to nominate the person who will collect each oil.
- **The liturgy** has been prepared as usual by the Chrism Mass Standing Committee and this year with the assistance of the College of Assistant Masters of Ceremonies. You will notice some changes to the liturgy:
  - The Bishop's Chair will remain empty. It is the primary symbol that we are a church without a Bishop.
  - There will be no 'Renewal of Commitment of Ministry' (of the faithful and deacons) as has been the custom in our diocese, and no 'Renewal of Priestly Promises'. Particularly the 'Renewal of Priestly Promises' is an expression of the

covenant relationship or communion that exists between a Bishop and the priests of a diocese. The dialogue between the Bishop and the Priests begins ‘... are you resolved to renew in the presence of **your** Bishop ...’. While Bishop Danny can consecrate the Oil of Chrism, he is not **our** Bishop and does not have the necessary relationship with our priests.

- **Clergy** will be vesting in the Murray Room and joining the Entrance Procession.
- **Supper** will be in the Victor Peters Suite. This space will enable us to catch up socially in a safe environment. We hope you will stay.
- Our **Mystagogical Reflection Resource**, ‘Blessing of Holy Oils’ has been updated. It is available on our [website](#) for any person or group to use for prayer before or after the Chrism Mass.
- A resource to assist parishes in preparing to **receive the Holy Oils into the parish Church** during Holy Week (Holy Thursday) is also available under ‘Chrism Mass’ on our [website](#).
- The Chrism Mass will be live streamed for those who would ordinarily be there but need to stay away because of COVID.

If our circumstances change between now and the Mass, this article will be updated with revised information. So, watch this space.

Preparing the Chrism Mass as a Church without a Bishop has invited us to reflect deeply, not just on the various parts of the liturgy and what changes are needed, but also on who we are as church. Something Bishop Bill said not infrequently has been echoing in my mind and heart. Sometimes, if his name was mentioned when other dioceses were looking for a Bishop, he used to explain that the relationship between a bishop and his diocese was like a marriage. The ordination of a Bishop enacts a covenant relationship that he believed should not be broken. Being without a Bishop places us in a very liminal space. Let us continue to [pray for the appointment of our new Bishop](#).

The other night a friend reminded me of what a blessing and opportunity our Chrism Mass is. She moved here some years ago, having lived in a few other dioceses. Until she came here, she’d never heard of a Chrism Mass. In the dioceses where she had lived it was not a major celebration of the whole church. She made me recall my first experience of the Chrism Mass as a novice. It was at the then Pro-cathedral in Maitland on Holy Thursday morning. The clergy were there and a scattering of people. How it has changed and grown over the years to the wonderful event it was before COVID. My friend reminded me of what a privilege it is to live in a church that values such opportunities to gather as a whole church to be made new in faith, hope and love. Bring on the Chrism Mass!

I am looking forward to seeing the bus from the Upper Hunter pull up out the front of the Cathedral as it did for many years up to and including 2019. I am looking forward to this campus being full of people by 6.30pm. Tea and coffee will be available in the Davis Courtyard for our travellers.

The Chrism Mass is ‘All Systems Go!’ for take-off on **Tuesday 12 April at 7.00pm in the Sacred Heart Cathedral, Hamilton**. All we need now is YOU!

This article is available [here](#) for download as a pdf.

**Acknowledgements:** Photos: © 2019 Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle. All rights reserved.