

February 22, 2010



**Preparing for the Passover of the Lord:
The Chrism Mass, Preparing for Baptism
and the Renewal of Baptismal Vows
Saturday March 27
St. James Cathedral**

9:00 am Refreshments and Gathering
9:30 am Anointing with the Spirit: A Program for Children and Adults
11:00 am Chrism Mass

Dear Friends,

I write to offer a brief reflection on our practice of the last several years regarding the blessing of the Oil of Chrism and the renewal of ordination vows. The Book of Common Prayer and the Book of Occasional Services describe the blessing and use of two oils: the oil of the sick and the oil associated specifically with Holy Baptism, Chrism. In this diocese for the last several years we have experimented with a different practice, that of blessing the Oil of Chrism by the bishop and recommending its use at both baptism and in the anointing of the sick, as a sacramental link with the identification of the whole of human life with the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ. This year I will return us to the traditional practice of blessing the Oil of Chrism as the particular oil associated with Baptism, and I will encourage priests with pastoral oversight to bless the oil of the sick as provided in the Prayer Book for use in their congregations. The Feast of St. Luke might be a significant day to observe for this, together with honoring the vocation of health care professionals and parish nurses.

On Saturday March 27, just before Holy Week, I invite the people of the Diocese of Chicago to join together to celebrate the blessing of Chrism for use at Easter baptisms and throughout the coming year. (In the future we might well plan this day earlier in Lent to enable even more people to attend.) I hope for a large gathering of priests, deacons, lay persons – young and old- and especially those who are candidates for baptism at Easter, sponsors, parents and godparents to join in a day of preparation for the Paschal Holy Days. We will pray with particular focus for those who have come to faith in Jesus Christ and who are preparing to be baptized. I want to emphasize their ministry in reminding us all of the awesome dignity of the baptism we all share. Accompanying this letter is one from our Canon for Lifelong Christian Formation, Vicki Garvey, regarding the renewal and importance of a catechumenal approach to the evangelization and formation of new sisters and brothers in Christ.

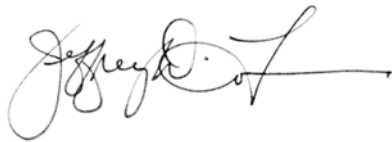
As always, ample amounts of Chrism will be available from the celebration on March 27 for use in the parish throughout the year. If requested however, Bishop Scantlebury and I would

be glad to bless Chrism at our visitations. In that case, please prepare a mixture of olive oil and fragrance. For simple ways to prepare this mixture, see the Chrism Recipes flyer accompanying this letter, or contact Canon Randall Warren rwarren@episcopalchicago.org. At the visitation, simply have the perfumed oil available to be blessed as indicated in the Prayer Book. In either case, to emphasize the beauty of the sign of anointing, I would prefer the oil to be in a clear container from which it can be poured as well as seen.

As I noted in my sermon at last year's Chrism Mass, the renewal of ordination vows was inserted into the Chrism liturgy only by Pope Paul the VI as a means of reinforcing clerical identity and obedience in the wake of the reforms of Vatican II. Anglicans imitated this practice in some places. I understand the real value many of us feel in the practice of renewing our vows together and in the presence of the bishops and I want to honor that. I propose to celebrate this renewal of vows in the context of our annual clergy conference, where we gather in a collegial setting and focus on aspects of our shared ministry as ordained persons. I believe our practice of individually renewing our vows and receiving the laying on of hands is most appropriate in that setting.

I look forward to celebrating these occasions with you. They are privileged moments in our life together and I hope these changes will make them even more significant for the whole People of God in this diocese.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey D. Lee", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jeffrey D. Lee
Bishop of Chicago