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Message for BBNeighbourhoods  
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My dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

This week in the Cathedral, we will be celebrating the annual Chrism Mass. Normally this celebration is held during Holy Week, however due to the COVID environment, I decided to postpone it until it was safe for priests and people to attend. We are still limited by the government restrictions for gathering, however, we are confident that a small assembly will be able to gather safely and responsibly.

The Chrism Mass is an opportunity to focus particularly upon two areas of ecclesial life. The first is the unity of all the baptised who are anointed in the power of the Holy Spirit and who form one Body in Christ. The second focus is the gift of the ministerial priesthood which has been entrusted to our priests who have been anointed to teach, lead, and sanctify the one Body of Christ – the Church.

I often speak about the community of the Church and in so doing my desire is that each one of us will take the time to reflect, discern, and pray about our work within the body as well as our mission beyond. Likewise, I would like us as a community to reflect upon the gift of the ministerial priesthood. In so doing, we might become more aware of the sacred duties entrusted to our priests who are ordained for the sanctification and service of the entire People of God.

You may have heard me say that the priest is on a pedestal. That language normally raises a few eyebrows. But, before you stop reading, bear with me as I explain what I mean. In the Gospel of John, the Evangelist John justifies my claim ([John 3:13-17](#)). John announces the lifting up of Christ on the pedestal of the cross. There is only one pedestal for the priest who is configured to Christ, and that is the Cross of Our Lord. The cross lies at the very centre of Jesus' mission and ministry. Through the death of Jesus salvation is given to the world. Salvation is the work of God.

Saint Paul writes in the letter to the Philippians “The state of Jesus Christ was divine, yet he did not cling to his equality with God... he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross” (cf. Phil 2:6-11).

One commentator points out that this is the paradox of the cross. God is both merciful and exacting at the same time. Saint Paul also reminds us that for those who are perishing this is mere foolishness, but for us who believe it is the power of God that saves. (cf. 1 Cor 1:18)

The cross demonstrates God's rage against sin and at the same time it shows God's mercy and love to the repentant sinner. The cross demands a response from you and me, from each person who is part of the Body of Christ.



Pope Francis invites us to contemplate the mystery of mercy ([Misericordiae vultus 2](#)). He reminds us that God's Mercy will always be greater than any sin, and no one can place limits on the love of God who is ever ready to forgive (MV3).

The first work of the priest is to be drawn to the cross and cherish its mercy. In so doing, his mission will be to lead others into the merciful presence of God. Before this can happen, the priest himself must taste God's mercy which can only happen if he is lifted up on the pedestal of the Cross of Christ.

This week as we prepare to celebrate the Chrism Mass, I commend to your prayer the priests of our Diocese of Broken Bay. Pray that the Lord will give them faith to claim as their only glory the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Remember them with thanksgiving to God.

There is power in the cross to draw all people to Jesus Christ for salvation. As Jesus himself promised, "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to myself" (Jn 12:32).

+Anthony