



## The Parish of Saint Anthony Glen Huntly

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### Homily at Mass 17<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time, Year C – 28 July 2019

St Paul talks to us today about Baptism. Each of us has been baptised – no doubt most if not all of us were brought to the church by our parents just a few days after birth to receive the Sacrament of new birth. We were baptised with water poured over us as the priest repeated the words of Jesus from the end of St Matthew’s Gospel: “I baptise you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* speaks of baptism as the “door way of the spiritual life”. Just as we come into the Church today through a door, so God welcomes us into his family, his holy Church, through the doorway of baptism. In Baptism, God our Father made us his children. In Baptism we became brothers and sisters of Christ, the son of God. In Baptism the Holy Spirit – the bond of love between the Father and the Son – entered into us, shining his light on our minds, filling our souls with his fire, himself. Baptism immerses us into the mystery of Christ’s death and resurrection. Our life as Christians is new and risen life, new and eternal life; this life has meaning, a hope and a goal because we are destined for Heaven, and life with God forever.

Immediately after Baptism the priest anointed our head with one of the Church’s holy oils – the oil of Sacred Chrism. Chrism is olive oil solemnly blessed by the bishop during Holy Week. When he prepares this oil the bishop adds perfume, and then he breathes into it. We don’t see the priest or bishop do anything like this at any other time in the Church’s worship. The perfume makes the Sacred Chrism stand out from the other oils we use in Christian life. The Oil of catechumens for those preparing for Baptism, and the Oil for the sick. When he breathes into the perfumed oil the bishop is imparting the Holy Spirit, so that when we are anointed with Chrism at Baptism and Confirmation, the Holy Spirit settles on us in this gentle oil, just as the Holy Spirit settled on Jesus at his Baptism in the form of a dove and the apostles received him on their heads in the form of a flame of fire.

I sometimes wonder why we should be anointed with Chrism at Baptism. Isn’t it enough to receive the life of God in the water of Baptism? There are perhaps one or two reasons we receive the anointing of Sacred Chrism at Baptism. The first is that in Baptism we become royalty – sons and daughters of God, witnesses of the kingdom of heaven. Another reason could be that our Mother the Church wants to give us the Holy Spirit so that our relationship with God might be helped and empowered by the Holy Spirit from the start.

The saints call prayer “conversation with God”. Talking is key to our worship with others. Mum and dad long for the day when their little baby can begin to speak. How proud they are when their little child forms the words “mum” and “dad”. And soon after that their little child begins to say other words, shape phrases and sentences, begins to build a vocabulary, and before long they’re a regular chatterbox!

We use words to express our thoughts, to communicate ideas. At Mass God speaks to us in his Holy Word. We respond with words, songs, gestures, silences, thoughtful attention, heartfelt love. Words are irreplaceable in our relationships with others. Friendships grow as we speak, find common interests, exchange views and ideas. The love of a man and woman grows as they speak to one another, and spend time in each others company. Their relationship takes major steps as they discover their love for one another, pop the question and make solemn vows with simple yet binding words: “I will love you and honour you all the days of my life”.

Today a disciple asks Jesus “Teach us to pray” and he responds with a prayer we call the Lord’s Prayer because it comes from the lips and heart of Jesus our Lord and Teacher. The Lord’s Prayer is familiar to all of us – we’ll recite it together today as we always do in preparation for Holy Communion. No Christian worship service is complete without the Lord’s Prayer: Our non-catholic brothers and sisters recite this prayer in their churches today just as we do. “Pray like this” Jesus says. He gives us a model, a pattern, a way of praying. First of all praise God and thank him. Then confident of his fatherly love, providence and care ask for things – our good Father can never hold back, he will always respond to the needs of his children. “Daily bread” includes food on the table as well as the Eucharist we receive today. We ask that God will forgive our sins, and that he will be our defence, our guard, our strong man especially in times of temptation.

What inspires this prayer? What encourages us to be confident when we pray? Jesus puts it simply:

“pray this way ... Father”