

HOMILY AT MASS OF CHRISM
Most Reverend Edgar M. da Cunha, S.D.V., D.D.
Bishop of Fall River
Tuesday of Holy Week, April 16, 2019
Cathedral of St. Mary of the Assumption

Salamat! - Nani! — Imela!- Arigatou! - Mercy! – Grazie! - Danke dir! - Gracias! – Obrigado! — Thank you!

Every language and culture has its own words and ways to express gratitude.

Gratitude is an important gift.

An attitude of gratitude benefits both the one who shows gratitude and those to whom gratitude is shown. So, today, I want to express my personal thanks to all of you for joining us for this special celebration. We come together as the people of God in the Diocese of Fall River, to celebrate this special and unique occasion of the blessing of the Holy Oils and the renewal of priestly promise by all the priests gathered here. The celebration of Chrism Mass is also an opportunity to express our appreciation for the priesthood of Jesus Christ that many of us share. It is a time to thank the Lord for our jubilarians who celebrate priestly milestones in their lives and to give thanks for the graces experienced in their living of the priesthood.



I wish this celebration here today to be an opportunity for all of us to express our gratitude to God and to each other. I am grateful to God for calling me to be a priest and a Bishop and for sending me here to be your shepherd. I am grateful to all my brother priests for whom they are and for their ministry and service to God's people here in our diocese. I am grateful to all of you, my brothers and sisters, for your faith, your prayers, your generosity and your collaboration in the mission God has entrusted to us.

I also want to invite our priests to recognize the gift they are to the Church and to recognize the gift our faith is to the Church and its mission. I ask you, my dear brothers and sisters, to recognize and express appreciation for the vocation ministry of our priests and to let them know that they are appreciated.

I want to make mine, the words of St. Paul today: *"I give thanks to my God always on your account for the grace of God bestowed on you in Christ Jesus"* (1 Cor. 1:4).

"We often take for granted the very things that most deserve our gratitude." (Cynthia Ozick)

"When a person doesn't have gratitude, something is missing in his or her humanity." (Elie Wiesel)

We need an attitude of gratitude.

God does not need our thanks, but we need to be thankful. If we look through the Scriptures, we read many times over (hundreds of times, literally) about how we need to give thanks to the Lord, how we need to bless the Lord, how we need to glorify the Lord, and so on.

We also read in Ps. 107: *"Give thanks to the LORD for he is good, his mercy endures forever!"*

As pray with Ps. 95: *"Come, let us sing joyfully to the LORD; cry out to the rock of our salvation. Let us approach him with praise and thanksgiving, and sing joyfully songs to the Lord"*

We must not be ungrateful people.

If we become an ungrateful people, that poisons our entire system. It poisons our nation. It poisons our society. If we are ungrateful, we become hostile, and we become small-minded, and we become hard-hearted.

The people *were being saved*, but they wouldn't be grateful for it because of present and endangering circumstances in the desert. They seem to have forgotten the joy of being led out of Egypt's slavery and got mired in their most current fears and complaints.

The Israelites show us that gratitude is a hard virtue when we are being besieged. We generally are okay when things go our way, but thanksgiving may fail us in times of severe need. To focus on God's actions on our behalf calls out the true and humble response of "thank you, Lord, for your faithfulness to us!"

Gratitude changes us.

"Today I choose to live with gratitude for the love that fills my heart, the peace that rests within my spirit, and the voice of hope that says all things are possible."

As St. Paul reminds us: And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (Col. 3:17).

*"In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus" (1Thes. 5:18).
"It is only with gratitude that life becomes rich." (Deitrich Bonheiffer)*

This humble awareness leads to your becoming **less self-centered** and more mystery-centered.

We all tend to take things for granted.

This impacts the way we see God and others and the way we connect with them. A grateful attitude makes us notice the needs, pains and sufferings of others, which leads us to be more compassionate in dealing with others.

What are we grateful for?

To be grateful is to find blessings in everything. This is the most powerful attitude to adopt, for there are blessings in everything." (Alan Cohen)

Gratitude is the highest duty of the believer and the supreme virtue, the fountain from which all other blessings flow. Ingratitude on the other hand, is the leprosy of the soul. It eats away on the inside, destroys our happiness, cripples our joy, withers our compassion, paralyzes our praise and renders us numb to all the blessings of God.

Gratitude helps us see the good side of people and things; and see them more positively. Instead of seeing a person as a complainer, we could see them as someone who wishes that things be done right, who does not tolerate wrongdoing.

In writing to the Ephesians St. Paul tells them and us: *"Therefore, I, too, hearing of your faith in the Lord Jesus and of your love for all the holy ones, do not cease giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers."* (Eph. 1:15).

"Giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, give thanks in the midst of suffering" (Eph. 5:20).

We are here celebrating the Eucharist, the ultimate sign, and act of Thanks, because "**Eucharist**" means just that: "**thanksgiving**."

The Preface to the Eucharist says: "It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord...."

Jesus took the bread and, **GIVING THANKS**, broke it....In a similar way, he took the chalice and, once more **GIVING THANKS** gave it to his disciples.....

By celebrating and partaking of the Eucharist, we offer thanks and praise to God, we recognize the gift God offers us and at the same time we recognize the gift we are for each other.

The Eucharist is a *SACRUM CONVIVIVUM*. It means no ordinary meal, but a banquet, an occasion for joy, a gathering of loved ones and therefore something of a communal nature from which life is derived. Its sacred character translates all these qualities to the level of the divine.

It strikes me that the best and maybe only thing that we have to give back to God is our humble faithfulness, our being grateful for the ways that God loves us even when that faithfulness stretches our limits.

Showing gratitude is one of the simplest yet most powerful things humans can do for each other." (Randy Rausch)

What am I grateful for? Am I grateful for my life? Am I grateful that I can walk, talk, think, see, feel, and be open to the wonders of the universe that surround me? What is my response to the fears and difficulties of life when they come my way?

If you feel unthankful, stop what you are doing and take a walk.

"Gratitude makes sense of your past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow." (Melody Beattie)

When you do something good for others, don't always expect to be thanked for it. May we already feel already for the opportunity to help others, whether they thank us or not. If they don't thank us, it's their problem, not ours. Don't make it a problem for yourself.

The soil in which the seed of gratitude takes root and bears lasting fruit is **Generosity**.

Are you grateful because you are happy or are happy because you grateful? "If you want to find happiness, find gratitude." "It's not happiness that brings us gratitude. It's gratitude that brings us happiness." (Anonymous)