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CNS documentary service

Chrism Mass Homily

Pope Francis

A priest is called to be in the midst of his flock, protecting his people, searching for those who are lost and always serving those in need, Pope Francis told the world's priests. If a priest wants to overcome those inevitable moments of sadness, exhaustion and boredom as well as discover his true identity, he must head for the exit sign, going outside himself to be with God and his people, the pope said April 17 during the chrism Mass in St. Peter's Basilica. The priest must also be a dutiful servant who listens to people's needs and builds a church whose doors are wide open, offering refuge for sinners, a home for the homeless, comfort for the sick and God's word and joy for the young, Pope Francis said. Presiding over the first of two Holy Thursday liturgies, Pope Francis

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blessed the oils that will be used in the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, ordination and the anointing of the sick. Joined by more than 1,500 priests, bishops and cardinals, Pope Francis led them in a renewal of their priestly promises and in a reflection on what it means to be a priest. The pope spoke in Italian; a Vatican translation of his homily follows, copyright © 2014 by Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

In the eternal "today" of Holy Thursday, when Christ showed his love for us to the end (cf. Jn 13:1), we recall the happy day of the institution of the priesthood as well as the day of our own priestly ordination. The Lord anointed us in Christ with the oil of gladness, and this anointing invites us to accept and appreciate this great gift: the gladness, the joy of being a priest.

Priestly joy is a priceless treasure not only for the priest himself but for the entire faithful people of God: that faithful people from whom he is called to be anointed and whom he, in turn, is sent to anoint. Anointed with the oil of gladness so as to anoint others with the oil of gladness. Priestly joy has its source in the Father's love, and the Lord wishes the joy of this love to be "ours" and to be "complete" (Jn 15:11).

I like to reflect on joy by contemplating Our Lady, for Mary, the "mother of the living Gospel, is a wellspring of joy for God's little ones" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 288). I do not think it is an exaggeration to say that a priest

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