

St. Michael's site of Chrism Mass

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

Some changes are in store for this year's Chrism Mass, the popular Holy Week service in which Bishop Matthew H. Clark blesses holy oils to be used by diocesan parishes throughout the upcoming year.

The annual liturgy is being relocated this year to St. Michael's Church, 869 N. Clinton Ave. near the corner of Clifford Avenue, due to renovation work at Sacred Heart Cathedral. It will take place Tuesday evening, April 6, at 7:30 p.m.

Joan Workmaster, diocesan director of liturgy, said St. Michael's was chosen because of its spacious interior—the Chrism Mass draws about 800 people each year—and because the church has recently restored many of its historic stained-glass windows, statues and other relics. Tours of St. Michael's will be offered on the night of the Chrism Mass.

Additionally, Workmaster said, the multicultural neighborhood surrounding St. Michael's is symbolic of the many ethnic groups who normally attend the Mass.

"Even though the cathedral is urban also, St. Michael's really represents the inner-city community, especially the Hispanic community," Workmaster said.

Workmaster acknowledged that parking and security might be a concern for people unfamiliar with St. Michael's, but noted that ample parking is available in church and other nearby lots, as well as on adjacent streets. Drop-off zones also will be established in front of the church with handicapped parking on the side, and security will be provided by the Rochester Police Department and students from Rochester Institute of Technology.

Another notable change will be the commitment to priestly ministry,

which has not been part of the Chrism Mass in approximately 25 years. According to Workmaster, the commitment—in which concelebrating priests renew their pledges to their vocation—has taken place during the annual priests' convocation. But diocesan priests asked Bishop Clark to have it returned to the Chrism Mass where it originated, so it can reflect the community aspect for which it was intended. As a result, many more priests are expected to attend this year's liturgy than have done so in the recent past.

Three oils are blessed during the Chrism Mass: the Oil of the Sick, used for the Anointing of the Sick; the Oil of the Catechumens, for baptism; and the Sacred Chrism, for confirmation and ordination. The Oil of the Sick will be blessed near the end of the Eucharistic Prayer, and the Oil of the Catechumens and Sacred Chrism after Communion. After Bishop Clark blesses the oils, they are distributed to parish representatives to take back for use in their respective faith communities.

The Chrism Mass, traditionally celebrated on Holy Thursday, is now being celebrated earlier during Holy Week to minimize conflicts with special services in parishes.

Workmaster said members of many faith communities travel by car pool and bus, including a large representation from the Finger Lakes and Southern Tier regions.

"This is the one Mass all year where the entire diocese is invited to gather with the bishop," Workmaster said.

According to Father Robert Schrader, pastor of St. Mary's in Auburn, numerous Auburn-area parishes will again take part in a bus trip with many individuals traveling



File photo

After blessing the Oil of Catechumens during the April 15, 2003, Chrism Mass at Sacred Heart Cathedral, Bishop Matthew H. Clark watches as it is presented to the congregation by Jon Wycoff (from right), Brian Wagner, Katie Looney, Amanda Chebetar and Lori Fioravanti, catechumens from Fairport's St. John of Rochester Church. Deacon Thomas Cleary (center), also of St. John of Rochester, observes from the background.

by car as well. The bus excursion usually draws 40 to 50 people, including himself.

"I don't think I've missed the Chrism Mass in the whole 12 years I've been in Auburn, and there may have been only one Chrism Mass I've missed since my ordination 26 years ago," Father Schrader noted. "The

gathering of the whole diocese is very powerful and provides a strong sense of connectedness among all the parishes of our 12 counties. It is also a beautiful liturgy and great care is put into its planning and execution, providing a fine example of what the possibilities of good liturgy can be."

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