



## ***Homily at the Mass of the Sacred Chrism***

**2025**

Saint Anthony's is a landmark building in this part of Manchester. Parishioners tell me, its tower was used as a visual point of reference, helping aircraft align as they came into land at the airport beside us. Perhaps not an entirely comforting thought for those sat in these benches! Yet on my visits to all the churches of the Diocese and kneeling before every tabernacle, it is a consoling thought that, whatever the height or scale of the church might be, we find therein the point of reference for all lives in the Mystery of the Eucharist.

The Chrism Mass invites us each year on the eve of each Paschal Triduum to so turn our eyes, as in the synagogue of Nazareth, to Christ truly present among us. As the Book of Revelation declares: *“Every eye shall see Him, even those who pierced Him ...”*; He who is *“the Alpha and Omega, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty”*<sup>1</sup>. The same Jesus acclaimed as the “sure foundation” at the beginning of this Mass, invites us in the Sacrifice and Sacrament of His Eucharist to align our hearts with His own Heart. Indeed, we could never hope to find our way in this life, nor hope to arrive safely at our destination, unless we were ready in Pope Francis's words, to be attentive to the silence of the Eucharist.

Fifteen years ago, I was ordained here in Saint Anthony's to serve you as a bishop. I knew little of the Shrewsbury Diocese and so lacked any human point of reference but knew the sure foundation on which we must build.

It led me to choose the Gospel words *Nihil Sine Christo* for the time of my service, as a sober statement of spiritual reality: that we can do nothing without Christ, without His grace, without His Eucharist. The Catholic Priesthood, for which we give thanks on this night, serves to guarantee this sure foundation in every community of our Diocese.

At my first Chrism Mass, I spoke to you of the Divine vocation of the Catholic Priest at a time when scandals threatened momentarily to obscure it. Shortly afterwards, I was accompanied by the Bishop of Ars, when we brought the relic of the heart of Saint John Vianney, first to be welcomed by thousands here in Wythenshawe and then across the Diocese and beyond, as we prayed for the renewal of the Priesthood, the mission of our parishes and for new and generous vocations. It was at the Chrism Mass at Saint Anthony's in 2013, that I asked you to pray for a new programme of discernment for the Priesthood, which has proved fruitful in helping men respond to their calling in the light of the Eucharist.

Most recently, we brought the heart of Blessed Carlo Acutis to Saint Anthony's. For the hearts of the saints are most fully aligned with the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus. Carlo Acutis, a new saint from the millennial generation – 'in jeans and trainers' - spoke from his heart to so many in what was surely one of the largest gatherings in the history of our Diocese. Tonight, at the Chrism Mass, which has been the place of many hopes and prayers, I want us to take up the spiritual path proposed by Pope Francis for our time: in renewing devotion to the Heart of Jesus; or rather, to ensure that we seek to build and re-build, every initiative and undertaking in our Diocese, on this sure foundation of the love of Christ's Heart, opened to us in the Holy Eucharist.

May this be our focus in all our homes and parishes, recognising with the Holy Father that *“Mission, as a radiation of the love of the Heart of Christ, requires missionaries who are themselves in love and who, enthralled by Christ, feel bound to share this love that has changed their lives”<sup>i</sup>*.

It is the pure and sinless Heart of Mary which is of all hearts most closely aligned to the Heart of Jesus. And so, I wish this evening to send an image of Our Lady, as she is depicted in our Cathedral in the joy of her Visitation, to every school and college of the Diocese. As Pope Francis speaks of Our Lady as truly the pilgrim of hope, for he declares, *“Hope finds its supreme witness in the Mother of God. In the Blessed Virgin, we see that hope is not naive optimism but a gift of grace amid the realities of life”<sup>iii</sup>*.

May this Holy Mother always accompany this Shrewsbury Diocese on its pilgrim journey amid the turbulence of time, helping us remain aligned with the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, so that all may arrive safely home. May Mary, the Help of Christians, Saint John Vianney and (the soon to be) ‘Saint’ Carlo Acutis, pray for us! Amen.

---

<sup>i</sup> (Rev. 1:8)

<sup>ii</sup> (*Dilexit* Nos. No. 209)

<sup>iii</sup> (*Bull of Indiction for the Jubilee 2025* No. 24)