Fifth Sunday of Easter: 5/7/23—5:00 PM, 7:30 and 9:30 AM

I have here a Roman collar and a bottle of Stetson, a men’s cologne. The question: what do they have in common? The answer: the priesthood of the laity.

St. Peter mentions the concept of all of us being priests, both clergy and laity, twice in today’s Second Reading when he writes ***Let yourselves be built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ*** and then later when he says, ***You are "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own***…” When we think of “priesthood,” we tend to think of guys wearing one of these, but the concept of priesthood is much more important and much more basic than what I do as a ministerial priest. In a sense, as I bring Christ to you, so you, as the lay faithful of the Church, are to bring Christ to the whole world, that is, to your families, to your places of employment, to your politics, to your friends, to your hobbies, to your neighbors, to your sports, to the people at Walmart and Costco, to every situation and to every person. I always like the statement, “You are the only Bible that some people will ever read.” That’s a central aspect of what it means to be a priest, but it is not only a matter of bringing Christ to your families, your places of employment, to your politics, to your friends, to your hobbies, to your neighbors, et cetera, et cetera. Being a priest also means bringing all those folks and all of those situations to Christ, in other words, interceding with Christ on their behalf. Our Baptisms and our being confirmed Catholic Christians “ordains” us, so to speak, in that priesthood of which St. Peter speaks today. That’s where this Roman collar comes in because you all are priests of God even though you don’t wear a Roman collar like I do or serve in the ways that I do. Yet you are priests because you are to bring Christ to the world but also to bring the world to Christ.

Okay, that’s this Roman collar, but where does this bottle of men’s cologne fit in? It goes back to this holy oil called Chrism. Every Holy Thursday, the bishop of the diocese blesses three holy oils to be used that year. One is the Oil of the Catechumens by which the one to be baptized is strengthened to live as a son or daughter of God. Another is the Oil of the Sick which is used in the Sacrament of anointing of the Sick. But the third one is Chrism. The word “Chrism” comes from “Christ,” and it is used in Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders, sacraments that are meant to make us to be more like Jesus Christ the High Priest, as we are sent to bring Christ to the world and the world to Christ. One of the unique features of Chrism is that it is a scented oil, a perfumed oil. It has a special smell which the other two don’t have. The importance of Chrism being a scented oil goes back to something St. Paul says in 2 Cor. 2:15-17 where he says, “We bear the aroma of Christ.” Just as a bottle of cologne or a bottle of perfume gets people’s attention and changes the atmosphere in a room, so are we to get people’s attention attracting them to Christ and to change the atmosphere in our world by loving people as Jesus loved them.

Again, St. Peter said to us a few moments ago, ***Let yourselves be built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ*** and also ***You are "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own***…”Please remember that, even though you don’t wear one of these and don’t serve as a priest in the same way I do, you are still no less priests in that your role really basically the same as mine, bringing Christ to the world and bringing the world to Christ. Please remember as well that you too are to bear the aroma of Christ by changing the atmosphere in our world by loving people as Jesus loved them. Again, I think that all of this is summarized so well by this very simple saying, “You are the only Bible that some people will ever read.”