



SAINT LOUIS ABBEY



Mass for Renewal of Vows
August 18, 2001
9:45 a.m. Mass

Votive Mass of Saint Benedict

Homily

"We have left everything and followed you? What then shall we have?" Peter's question to the Lord. And the reply: "Eternal life, and even in this age, a hundredfold."

Eternal life. At the Last Supper, the Lord tells his apostles what it is: 'This is eternal life, to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.' Eternal life, then, is God, God's gift of himself to us, God to be possessed by us, if we may use such language, God to be possessed by us by knowledge and love. "You are my inheritance, O Lord," as we exclaim in the Responsorial Psalm. And you are my inheritance, O Lord, in your triune being: eternal life is to know and love the Father, and to know and love the Son, and to be caught up by knowledge and love in the Love between Father and Son who is the Holy Spirit. Nothing less, nothing less than God, nothing less than Father, Son and Holy Spirit in their ineffable communion will bring rest to the human heart: "My happiness lies in you alone. What else in heaven have I but you? Apart from you I want nothing on earth. My body and my heart faint for joy; God is my possession for ever."

The promise of the everlasting possession of himself by the beatifying vision of him as he is is the Lord's promise to each one of his followers. But for those whom he has called to the consecrated life, called to leave everything, as Peter says, in order to follow him, he has a special and great gift. That gift is a life in which the Lord is already his all, in which the consecrated one is, as Saint Paul says, undivided. God is his possession, he has no other; God is the one whom he loves, he has no other; God is his will, he has no other. His life here on earth is already emptied, in order that God may already be his all. This emptying of everything that is not God in order that there may be nothing but God is brought to its highest pitch in the monastic life, whose charism does not essentially include any kind of apostolic work but consists essentially only in the search for God, and which therefore anticipates as fully as may be in this age the state we shall all enjoy in the age to come, when God shall be all in all. As we shall declare later in the Prayer Over the Gifts, "Saint Benedict in his wisdom taught us the self-denial of the Cross" -- that is, the utter emptying of the Cross -- "so that we might live in truth" -- that is, in reality here and now -- "the gospel mystery" -- that is, the mystery of the triune God.



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Yet there is still more -- not that any more could be needed or could be added -- yet still more so that, as it were, all may be brought to perfection. There is the hundredfold reward, even in this age. Here we come to the great paradox of renunciation, of the Cross.

By giving up all possessions for the sake of God, the monk receives all creation as his home. By giving up all beloveds for the sake of God, the monk receives all human beings as his friends. By giving up every desire and will for the sake of God, the monk is filled with love, and may do what he will. The hundredfold reward, even in this age, indeed.

This, then, is what you shall have, Peter, for giving up all to follow him: eternal life, and even in this age, a hundredfold. You have him, and all things in him. And is he not all your love? Run, then, to rededicate yourself to him, give yourself again to him, as he has given himself to you.

And will we not follow you this morning, here, and renew our vows with love and thanksgiving, and give ourselves again to him, who has given himself to us, poor servants and lovers though we are?