

SAINT LOUIS ABBEY



Feast of Saint Louis
Mass of First Profession of Brother Alban
August 25, 2001

Homily

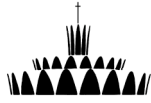
Brother Alban, you have asked for God's merciful love and to share in the monastic way of life in our community.

When I asked you a few days ago why you want to be a monk, your answer was: "to increase my relationship with Christ". That has been your answer, in so many words, every time I have asked you that question.

To increase your relationship with Christ. What a worthy goal, Brother Alban, and indeed, very obviously, any other goal whatsoever is infinitely less than this goal. To increase your relationship with Christ -Christ, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life; Christ, who is the Resurrection and the Life; Christ, who is the Light of the world; Christ, who shines with glory as of the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth; Christ, whom to know is to live, whom to serve is to reign. Great and worthy indeed is the goal you have chosen, Brother Alban, this goal which is eternal life.

And how worthy the means you have chosen for seeking this goal, this means which is the monastic way of life. "Let them prefer nothing to Christ": that is the greatest of the injunctions which Saint Benedict gives to those who would follow the monastic way. Every element of this life is structured so that Christ is the supreme goal, the only goal. You will give up every possession, Brother Alban, so that Christ is your only possession. You will forswear all beloveds, so that Christ is your only beloved. You will renounce all your desires and will, so that Christ is your only will. Christ alone will you seek, and Christ alone will you share with the others whom, one day, please God, you will serve.

Brother Alban, when a very young person, such as yourself, dedicates his whole self, his whole heart, to Christ in the monastic way of life, there is in his action something lavish, something ecstatic, something wild, divinely wild. A whole life, not the remainder of a life already in part lived for oneself and one's own purposes, but a whole life, the whole of it lying in the

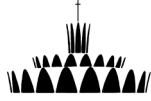


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future, untouched and pure, a whole life, in one great grace-inspired act of radical generosity, is given to God, in joy, with never any looking back. This act inspires us, Brother Alban, it greatly builds up our faith and our hope. Confirm this act which Christ has given you to make, confirm this act here before us this morning. Do not listen, Brother Alban, to those who say that a young person cannot make such an act, that first he must have what is called "experience" of the world, of our dreary world. Do not listen to them, but listen to Christ, who said to let the children come unto him, and who said that if a man does not become like a child he shall never enter the kingdom of heaven. Witness to us all today, Brother Alban, witness to us today that it is still possible, in our sad and dreary world, witness to us that it is still possible, by the loving mercy and grace of God, to give oneself to the infinite, to break through in one great action all the confinements and constrictions of this world, and give one's heart to God. Witness to your classmates and friends who are here with you today, witness to all of us, Brother Alban, that when it comes time for a young person to decide to what he shall give his life, it is not necessary to think only of what life will bring me the most money, what life will bring me the most pleasure, what life will bring me the most freedom, as the world understands it, what life will bring me the most success, what life will bring me the best career, what life will bring me that profession and station in life which alone my society, my class, yes my family and my peers find acceptable. Witness to us, Brother Alban, that it is not necessary to think of these things, but that, by the grace and mercy of God, it is possible to break through them all, and to give one's mind and heart, one's very self, to God. Witness to us, Brother Alban, that if our calling is to the lay life, we too must not be content to leave our life only with the meaning which it has within the context of this world, but must, by the grace of God, direct everything in it to Christ, and recognize that it is the best way for us, through the mediation of our work with the realities of this world in accordance with the will of God, to attain that relationship with Christ which you aspire to be immediate in your life, to be the whole of your life.

Brother Alban, it is something very great to which you aspire, something far beyond your natural powers to attain, something which can be yours only by the grace of God. So, before you asked to share in the monastic way of life in our community, you asked for a share in God's merciful love. For it was God in his merciful love, Brother Alban, who created you, it was God in his



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merciful love who redeemed you, it was God in his merciful love who called you, it is God in his merciful love who has brought you here this morning, and who will give you the strength to make your vows, and to be faithful to them. And the Lord gives you the assurance of his merciful love under the sign of two great saints: Saint Louis, whose feast day is today, and who has looked after you since you were a boy, for it was as a boy that you came to this place, and that God first spoke to you, in this Abbey of Saint Mary and Saint Louis. And then, Saint Alban Roe, your great patron, the one after whom you are named, the martyr of the community of Saint Laurence, our mother community -- Saint Alban Roe, who was not a young man when he died, but who died with the fire of a young man, that fire which burns in you: "Oh, that I had a thousand lives," he exclaimed, "Oh, that I had a thousand lives, I would sacrifice them all for so worthy a cause."

Come, Brother Alban, and, by the grace of God, make your vows.