



SAINT LOUIS ABBEY



**MASS OF SOLEMN PROFESSION OF BROTHER CUTHBERT ELLIOTT,
O.S.B.**

September 4, 2010 – Saint Louis Abbey

Abbot Thomas Frerking, O.S.B.

Dear Brother Cuthbert, you have just asked the Lord that you might dedicate yourself to his service as a monk of this monastery all the days of your life, that is, forever, forever closing off every other possibility that still, for a few brief minutes here before you make your solemn vows, lies open to you. How is it that the Lord has led you to this extraordinary moment, a moment to which he leads few?

In the First Reading which you chose for this your Mass of Solemn Profession, we hear of the boy Samuel who was entrusted by his mother to the Temple of the Lord to be schooled for the service of the Lord under the old priest Eli. You as a boy were entrusted by your mother to this monastery and its school to be schooled in the Lord under the monks, who were together your old priest Eli. One day the Lord called you. You did not understand that it was the Lord. You ran to Eli and said, “You called me.” “No, my son,” said Eli, “I did not call you. Go back to sleep.” Again the Lord called, again you ran to Eli, the old man said again, “No, my son, I did not call you.” And then a third time. This time Eli recognized that it was the Lord who was calling you. “Go back to your place, my son,” he said, “and if he calls, say, ‘Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.’”

You entered the Novitiate of this monastery. For he had called again, and this time you recognized him, for, as the Scriptures say, “he came and revealed his presence.” You entered the Novitiate, but still you knew little, except that you must listen, listen always – “If today you hear his voice . . .” – listen always, seek a guide, and, as we heard in the Responsorial Psalm you chose, remember your utter dependence on the Lord, look for the Lord’s help each day, seek the Lord, and in the light of the Lord begin to see the world as it really is and begin to learn the Lord’s way, that even way on which he would lead you.

You made your first vows, and you began to discover, as Saint Benedict teaches in his Rule, that a primary way in which you were called to encounter the Lord was through the monastic community itself. You learned that a primary barometer of how you love the Lord is how you treat your neighbor, your brother in the monastery and those whom your brothers seek to serve. So you entered into that Scripture you chose for the Second Reading, that word of the Lord through Saint Paul addressed, as it were, to the entire monastic community: “Put on, as ones chosen by the Lord, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Bear with one another and forgive one another, as the Lord has forgiven you. Over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection. Let the peace of Christ rejoice in your hearts, the peace into which



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you are called in one Body.” Brother Cuthbert, you have learned these lessons well; we all know and acknowledge that you have. How you have sought and striven after peace. So you began to understand the further meaning of this word through Saint Paul: “Let the peace of Christ rejoice in your hearts. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. Teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs in your hearts to God. And be thankful. Whatever you do, in word or in deed, do in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” Oh, Brother Cuthbert, you began to know the wonder and beauty and joy of the monastic life, the life of that joyous and constant attitude – shall we call it ‘unceasing prayer’? – that joyous and constant attitude of wonder and thanksgiving before the Lord and his works, the fruit of a love become the very form of a life given over to constant conversion and the search for God.

So Brother Cuthbert, we come to this day, to this moment. Now you are here before the Lord alone. Yes, we are all here with you, we love you and we are praying for you at this moment. Yet, at this moment in your life, it cannot but be that you and the Lord are here together alone with one another. You have asked him, “What yet do I lack?” His word comes to you in reply. This word is addressed not to a boy, not to a youth, for a boy, a youth, is not yet ready to hear this word. This word is addressed to one who has now become a young man, for only a man is capable, by the Lord’s grace, of hearing this word and responding to it. The word he addresses to you is, “If you would be perfect, go, sell all that you have and give to the poor . . . Then come, follow me.” “Now,” he says to you, “now we come to this day, to this moment, you and I, who have been travelling together since that day when I called you when you were a boy, now we come to this moment, when you are man. Now take all that you have, everything that you are, your whole life, and give it to me. Give all that you have to service of me, and to service of my poor, my poor who are my Body, whom I will bring to you day after day, year after year, many. Give all to me, and come, follow me.” It is a hard word, Brother Cuthbert. Indeed, for man it is an impossible word. “But for God all things are possible.” And in the faith that that is so, you remember, Brother Cuthbert, that in this word he makes a promise to you. The promise is, “You will have reward in heaven.” To have reward in heaven. What can this be but . . . to have *him*, the Lord himself? And now when by the light of faith you see this, does not your whole being cry out in your heart with the cry of the Psalmist: “What else have I in heaven but you! Apart from you I want nothing on earth!” Yes, Brother Cuthbert, we might say, might we not, that to possess the Lord is, so to speak, enough.

Come, Brother Cuthbert, and make your solemn vows.