



SAINT LOUIS ABBEY



**Mass of Solemn Profession of Brother John McCusker      Saint Louis Abbey**

**January 8, 2011**

**9:00 a.m. Mass**

**Homily**

Dear Brother John, the texts you have chosen for this your Mass of Solemn Profession allow us to glimpse something of the vision and yearning of your heart at this great moment in your life to which the Lord has called and drawn you, when you have just asked to bind yourself to him by lifelong commitment.

First, your now free, total and joyful embracing of the yearning the Lord has placed in your heart to make the monastic search for God the essence and meaning of your life. We hear of this in the very first words of the Mass, in the Introit:

To you, Lord, my heart has spoken:  
I have sought your face,  
your face, Lord, I seek;  
turn not your face away from me.

And in the Responsorial Psalm:

O God, you are my God, for you I long;  
for you my soul is thirsting.  
My body pines for you  
like a dry, weary land without water.  
So I gaze on you in the sanctuary  
to see your strength and your glory.

But then, secondly, as part of that total dedication of yourself to the search for God, your apostolic yearning, your yearning to magnify the Lord before others, so that they too might see his truth, his goodness, his beauty, and so yearn for him too. So there is the First Reading of the Mass, the great vision of the prophet Jeremiah of the ultimate fulfillment of this apostolic yearning of yours, of the apostolic yearning of the Church in all the ages:

. . . this is the covenant which I will make  
with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord.  
I will place my law within them, and write it upon their  
hearts;  
I will be their God, and they shall be my people.  
No longer will they have need to teach their friends and  
relatives how to know the Lord.



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All, from the least to the greatest, shall know me, says the Lord,  
For I will forgive their evildoing and remember their sin no more.

And then the Second Reading, the great apostolic call to all humanity to faith in the fulfillment the prophet promises, to living hope for it, to love of it, the call to which you yearn to give expression with all your intellect and will, with all your gifts of person, of understanding, of music and art, with all your being, from this day forward:

[We have] an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for [those] who by the power of God are safeguarded through faith . . . . In this rejoice, although now for a little while you may have to suffer through various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith . . . may prove to be for praise, glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Although you have not seen him . . . love him; even though you do not see him now . . . believe in him, [and] rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, as you attain the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

But now the Gospel, Brother John, now from the glorious fulfillment to the Cross, to the Cross of Jesus, which is always the way of Jesus to the glorious fulfillment:

Except a grain of wheat fall to the earth and die,  
it remains alone;  
but if it die, it yields much fruit.

Yes, Brother John, you have chosen this Gospel of the way of the Cross, with God-given understanding, and God-given embracing of the way. You have seen, you have embraced, that if your mind and heart are to be ever on the Lord, then you must forsake all others, then your way must be the way of celibacy for the kingdom. You have seen, you have embraced, that if in the Lord you are to call all into the family of the Lord, then you must forsake having a family of your own. You have seen, you have embraced, that if these human beings, this great family of this monastery and this local church, from whom the Lord has called you and for whom he now consecrates you for the rest of your life as a monk of this house – you have seen, you have embraced, that if it is the Lord's mysterious will to permit that in this life they should not see all that you see, taste all that you taste, then you must forsake the fulfillment in this age of all your yearnings for them, and wait for it in the age to come, and find your all, in this age and in the age to come, in the embracing of his holy will, in obedience and in stability in the life and service here to which he has called you. Yes, Brother John, you who under your brightness and cheer have long known that you were called to the Cross, yes, you have seen all this, and



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embraced all this, you feel the deep pain of it in the core of your being today, but today, by the Lord's grace, you shoulder your Cross, you join him in his carrying your Cross for you, and you cry out the words of the prophet Daniel which we hear in the Offertory Antiphon of this Mass:

As a holocaust of rams and bullocks, and of thousands of fatted lambs, so let my sacrifice be in your sight on this day, that it may be pleasing unto you; for there is no bringing to nothing of the hope of those who entrust themselves to you.

“ . . . there is no bringing to nothing of the hope of those who entrust themselves to you.” Oh, but there, Brother John, but there is the glorious completion of the Gospel you have chosen, there, there is the saving answer of the Lord to the prayer you will make to him in a few moments with your arms outstretched: “Receive me, O Lord, according to you word and I shall live; and do not bring to nothing all my hope.” There is the glorious fullness of the mystery of every Christian life, of the monastic life, of your life: “if the grain of wheat fall to the earth and die, then it shall yield much fruit.” “He who loves his life in this world will lose it; he who hates his life in this world shall find it, he shall preserve it for eternal life.” Yes, Brother John, give up all, but never give up your hope, make the sacrifice of yourself today, remain faithful to it and deepen it all the days of your life, and look for life, and more than life; know that the way of the Cross is precisely the way to life, the way to the fulfillment of all your hope, of what is infinitely beyond that for which you can now hope, what no eye has seen, no ear has heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man. Give up all, and gain all; sacrifice all, and receive all; all that you give up, everything, shall be returned to you, yes, we have the Lord's word for it: you shall receive thirty, sixty, a hundredfold in this life, and in the age to come, life eternal. “ . . . if the grain of wheat fall to the earth and die, it shall yield much fruit.” So already in this age your apostolic yearning shall lead you to receive a hundredfold: brothers shall be brought to you, children shall be given to you, and they will say with you: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his great mercy gave us a new birth to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead . . . .” So in the age to come your apostolic yearning shall be fulfilled, when all shall know the Lord. So in this age your monastic yearning shall lead you to find life, and more than life:

For your love [, O Lord,] is better than life,  
My lips will speak your praise.  
So I will bless you all my life,  
In your name I will lift up my hands.  
My soul shall be filled as with a banquet,  
My mouth shall praise you with joy.

On my bed I remember you.



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On you I muse through the night  
For you have been my help;  
In the shadow of your wings I rejoice.  
My soul clings to you;  
Your right hand holds me fast.

So in the age to come your monastic yearning shall be fulfilled, when you shall see him who has called you into his kingdom face to face.

Come, then, Brother John, you whose voice has so often been raised in song, come then, and with song and thanksgiving and joy in your heart, make your solemn vows to the Lord.