

Ordinary 10-B
Solemn Profession in the Order of Preachers
Sister Florentina Marie, OP

Queen of Peace Monastery

10 June 2018

Dear Sisters, above all Sister Florentina Marie with her family and friends:

Introduction

The Rite of Solemn Profession has begun with the impressive gesture of Sister Florentina Marie extended prostrate on the sanctuary floor as a sacramental, visible sign of her utter and total dependence upon God and her Sisters as she undertakes to respond wholeheartedly and perpetually to the call to be professed as a nun in the Order of Preachers. Later, at a second prostration during the Litany of Saints, it becomes even clearer that this profession, in a hidden but real way, is also a heavenly event, one which belongs to the whole Communion of Saints whose intercession we invoke. Sister, then, is inserted into the life of the Church in a deeper way, as one more completed given to prayer for us, the People of God.

Your great challenge, Sister Florentina, is to persevere along with your Sisters in the Monastery, in seeking God “with the eyes of faith in a world which ignores his presence”, and to continue to tell us by the joy of your life that Jesus’ life of chastity, poverty and obedience is a prophetic sign of the Kingdom to come, which is already unfolding in

our midst.

I am so grateful for the presence of the Dominican Nuns here at Queen of Peace Monastery. You are a great gift to our local Church. You enable us to carry out our more active tasks in the Vineyard because of your prayer for us. Your monastic life is the praying heart of our community of faith in the Archdiocese of Vancouver, “a storehouse of grace and apostolic fruitfulness, and a visible witness to the mystery and rich variety of holiness.”¹

As Paul mentions in today’s Second Reading, this ancient Rite of Solemn Profession urges us to “look not to what is seen but what is unseen; for what is seen is transitory, but what is unseen is eternal” (2 Cor 4:*). Above all else, the monastic life is to inspire all of us to a deeper, personal relationship with the Lord God himself, whom we are to love above all things. Be so centred on Christ that we can all say with the Apostle. “For to me, to live is Christ!” (Phil 1:21).

By your Profession, Sister Florentina, you are publicly accepting that until death your life will be totally given over to Jesus as your first and exclusive love. He is your Bridegroom. In mysterious ways known only to you in the depths of your heart, he has captivated you, enthralled you by his love. For your part, you have let herself “be touched by his

¹ Francis, *Vultum Dei Quaerere*, 5.

hand, led by his voice, sustained by his grace”² in this Monastery. From now on we rely on you to shine as a witness to God’s unconditional and faithful love for each one of us.

By dedicating yourself to the contemplative life in profound spousal union with the Lord Jesus, you witness to the profound truth that none of us, in the vocation we have received, is to prefer anything over the love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

By virtue of this absolute primacy reserved for Christ in this Monastery, your life with your Sisters is given to the celebration of God’s glory, where the mysterious but real divine presence in the world is adored and praised, where you seek to live the new commandment of love and mutual service, loving others as Jesus has loved us (cf. Jn 13:34).

By committing the rest of your earthly life to be “hidden with Christ in God” (Col 3:3), you will be living in a radical and visible-sacramental way the contemplative vocation which is at the heart of the Church universal and of our local Church as well. With you, Sister, we give thanks to the Lord for this beautiful day.

² Francis, Video-Message for the Vigil of Prayer at St. Mary Major on the Occasion of the Opening of the Year of Consecrated Life (29 November 2014).

Brief Reflection on the Readings

Now just a brief reflection from today's Readings, which touch so many themes: original sin and the promise of the Messiah, the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, and the seeming rebuff of Mary and Jesus' relatives.

I have just one point to make.

Our reading from chapter 3 of the Book of Genesis continues the account of the first "no," the original "no" – original sin – when man and woman preferred their own will to God's. Adam and Eve wanted to go their own way. Over dependence on the Lord, they chose to be self-sufficient – or at least what they thought to be self-sufficiency.

But here we already see the initial consequences of that sin, which continues to drip like poison down through the history of humankind. First, they began to hide themselves in their nakedness from each other and from God; they became afraid. Suspicion of the other replaced original harmony.

Secondly, and this is most pronounced in the text, they set about accusing others of being the cause of their sinful action (cf. Gen 3:10,12). Adam held Eve responsible for his act of disobedience, as if she had forced him to eat the forbidden fruit. And, for her part, Eve claimed that "the serpent tricked her" (cf. Gen 3:12) into eating it. With these aspersions on the other and failure to take responsibility for one's

own action, “blame shifting” first made its appearance.

The serpent was too wily to deny God outright, but he awoke in Eve the suspicion that the relationship she and Adam enjoyed with God was a chain that bound them, one that deprived them of the freedom they deserved. Satan offered an alternative to such a God. He suggested that they could build the world by themselves by refusing to accept the limitations of being creatures. This is always the essence of temptation: creating the illusion that there is a path to life other than obedience to the Lord.³

As for us, who are heirs to this original sin, we too are tempted to think that obedience constricts our freedom. We want to break free – but not to “the will of God” about which speaks in the Gospel –but simply to our own desire for self-assertion. The vow of obedience tells us, as does human experience, that true freedom is found in God’s will, not our own.

And a second lesson can also be drawn. Like Adam and Eve, we accuse others of being responsible for our sins, failings and mistakes. We neglect to look at ourselves as the cause. Today’s account from Genesis calls us to own up to who we are – often willful and unwilling

³ Cf. R.R. Reno, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2010), 77-89; Benedict XVI, General Audience (6 February 2013).

to be responsible for our actions.

A Counterpoint to “No” is Mary’s “Yes”

Lest the above account from Genesis of original sin leave us a little dispirited on such a day, I would like to draw out the promise made at the end of the First Reading: the promise of a Redeemer who would crush the ancient serpent (cf. Gen 3:12-1).

Mary, of course, was the one through whom the knot tied by our first parents was untied. She transformed the “no” into the great “yes” of the Annunciation. Because of this ‘yes’ Jesus began his journey along the path of humanity; he began it in Mary, spending the first months of life in his mother’s womb: he did not appear as a man, grown and strong, but he followed the journey of a human being. He was made equal to us in every way, except one thing, that ‘no’. Except sin. For this reason, he chose Mary, the only creature without sin, immaculate.

Mary responds to God’s proposal by saying: “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord” (Lk 1:38). She does not say: “Well, this time I will do God’s will; I will make myself available, then I will see.”. No. Hers is a full, total ‘yes’, for her entire life, without conditions. A profession!

And just as the original ‘no’ closed the passage between man and God, so Mary’s ‘yes’ opened the path to God among us. It is the most important ‘yes’ in history, the humble ‘yes’ which reverses the prideful

original ‘no’, the faithful ‘yes’ that heals disobedience, the willing ‘yes’ that overturns the vanity of sin.

For each of us too, there is a history of salvation made up of ‘yeses’ and ‘nos.’ And with the Rite of Profession we have in Sister Florentina, a great “yes” united to that of Mary. With generosity and trust, like Mary, and following Sister Florentina, let us all say today, each of us, our own personal and unequivocal ‘yes’ to God.⁴

✦ J. Michael Miller, CSB
Archbishop of Vancouver

⁴ Cf. Francis, Angelus (8 December 2016).