

Homily on the Solemnity of the Assumption
of the Blessed Virgin Mary and First Profession of Vows
August 15, 2020

Dear Brothers (and sister),

Today we gather together on a special day for a special celebration—the Feast of the Assumption of Mary and the first profession of our four young brothers. For sure, it is a celebration different from any other in the history of our province and congregation. A religious profession in the time of COVID-19! Still, we remember, we celebrate, and we believe that God is with us here.

To those who are participating in this celebration by live stream, especially family members and friends of our novices—we welcome you and invite you to pray with us for our brothers.

Today's Gospel speaks of Mary's journey to visit her cousin Elizabeth and it speaks to all of us of the journey that Thien, Thuan, Hung and Truc have been on and will continue on in a new way today.

In reflecting on Mary and her life, I see a thread that is woven through it that can be summarized in two very important words: **Fiat**, and **Magnificat**.

Fiat: This is the first word of Mary's response to the Angel Gabriel: **Fiat:** *“Let it be done to me according to your word.”* Fiat speaks of Mary as a woman of faith and of surrender to the God who draws close to her and invites her into a special relationship. With her Fiat, Mary invites God to literally fill her

and give her life – the life of Christ within her, present in her and growing within. She agrees to give God her human nature in order that the Son of God can come into the world.

By making their public profession of vows, Thien, Thuan, Hung and Truc are also proclaiming to God and to us that they desire to be men of compassion, of service, of love – a love that expends itself and one that burns brightly even when it can cost deeply. It is a courageous stance, by these young men, in today's broken world– it is Fiat— *“let it be done to me according to your word.”*

The second word is **Magnificat**: This of course is the first word in Mary's great hymn of thanksgiving during her encounter with Elizabeth in the visitation: *“My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord.”* Mary's heart and soul shows and communicates the wonder and the joy, as well as the hope and the trust that fill up, overflows, and permeates her entire inner being. Throughout their novitiate, Thien, Thuan, Hung and Truc have experienced this same joy and they also exude the reality that is filling their inner being. Just look at them – could they look any more excited and happy?! Like Mary, they wonder at how God can look upon their littleness, how God looks on all of our littleness and fills us all with such good things that we can't help but cry out and rejoice in the blessedness that only God can bestow on us.

Fiat and Magnificat. These are Mary's words and Mary's experience. These are the words and experience of these four young men called to be sons of Fr. Leo John Dehon as Priests of the Heart of Jesus.

Dear brothers, today, you are here in Sacred Heart Monastery Chapel with open hearts and minds and you are proclaiming your yes to God. By your vows, you make an incredible act of surrender to the Father who created you, Jesus who redeemed you, and the Spirit who gives you your life's breath in order to make this total oblation and gift of yourself. As you follow this journey of the movement of your hearts and as you profess your vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience you are actually saying to Jesus, your Savior: **No wealth** but yours, **No love** but yours, **no will** but yours. I am completely yours.

Your life's journeys as vowed religious will be like that of the Mary's own journey: a pilgrimage of faith and consecration. A pilgrim – of necessity – cannot be weighed down by extra baggage. And for this reason, the evangelical counsels help you mirror in your own lives Mary's free response to the Lord's invitation. Poverty, chastity and obedience lived according to the spirit of our congregation's rule of life help you get rid of that "extra baggage" that can weigh you down as you seek to follow Christ. But these vows are not simply renunciations; rather the vows have freed you for the journey. May Mary's example – continue to encourage you on your journey.

As manna fed the Israelites on their journey through the desert, so too the Eucharist is our daily bread as we journey on our earthly pilgrimage. The Eucharist –so central to us as Priests of the Sacred Heart—Jesus' gift of himself – reveals God's infinite love for each one of us. The Sacrifice of Christ is for all and thus our communion in his Body and Blood commits us to work for and to build up a more just and fraternal world.

Finally, brothers, remember that you are not the only ones making a commitment here today. The God of Love who is your heart's deepest desire, is also, and even more deeply, committing himself to you. We, the professed members of the Priests of the Sacred Heart are committing ourselves to you. Today by professing your vows, you will forever be Thien of the Sacred Heart, Thuan of the Sacred Heart, Hung of the Sacred Heart and Truc of the Sacred Heart. Please, be the heart of Jesus in the world today. Be Jesus to everyone that you meet and encounter. Bring Jesus into all that you do and say and in all that you are. Allow me now to end with the words found in the beginning of Gabriel's words to Mary: "*Be not afraid*" for God is with you.

Today, is a day to congratulate these young men and promise them our prayers and support. It is a day to thank their family, their friends, and all those involved in their formation (here and in Vietnam) especially the director of novices (Byron), his associate (Andrzej), and their teachers who played such an important role in their vocation and formation.

Remember, brothers, today and every day: "In Father Dehon's own words: *our whole vocation, our purpose, our duty, our promises, are found in these words: Ecce venio, ... Ecce ancilla ... (Directoire spirituel, I, 3).*

Vivat cor Jesu. Per cor Marie!

Ecce Venio: ‘Behold, I come. Today these two words mean far more to me than the words I express here. That’s because the love of God for me - for all of us - is beyond description. In ancient days the people of Israel would offer sacrifices in the Temple of various animals and grains. But the Psalms beautifully anticipate the most perfect sacrifice: “Holocaust and oblation you sought not. Then said I: Behold, I come.” (Psalm 40) Jesus Christ, the Son of God, took on our flesh and came to offer the sacrifice not of birds or beasts, but of His very self. In this He has made us children of God and heirs of Heaven. But it is not enough to simply open the gates and wait for us. He stays here with us in the Eucharist to strengthen us so we can persevere in walking the narrow path to Eternal Life. Christ remains with us in the tabernacles of churches around the world, imprisoned not by chains but by Love. He longs to be with us so that we might be

with Him in glory. In His revelations to numerous saints throughout the centuries, He has continually sought out for Himself companions to remain with Him in the Eucharist. Adorers who make a point to spend time with Him, who speak to Him what He first spoke to us: 'Behold, I come.' Indeed our offerings may be small in comparison to His, but how He rejoices to see us before Him in the tabernacle or monstrance! This is what I have come to know in the depths of my soul in a place where words fall short. Jesus Christ abides with us. And He delights when we abide in Him. O, how He loves us!

Ecce Ancilla: "Behold the handmaiden of the Lord"

Sint Unum: **That they may be one**