



DEDICATION OF THE ABBEY CHURCH

FIFTY YEAR JUBILEE OF PROFESSION

Homily of the Right Reverend Dom Jean PATEAU
Abbot of Our Lady of Fontgombault
(Fontgombault, October 12th, 2025)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
My dearly beloved Sons,
and most especially you, who are celebrating today
your jubilee of religious profession,

GOD'S PLAN is always carried out throughout the maze of our human lives. The most unlikely encounter between Zacchaeus and Jesus, and the former's conversion, are proof of this fact.

Who was this man? No need for him to show his identity card. Everybody knew him. Everybody hated him. Although he was a Jew, he collected taxes on behalf of the Romans, and grabbed a large part of them for his own profit.

Over time, prison walls had been erected around Zacchaeus, walls that separated him from his blood brothers and from God. He was no longer able to go towards Jesus. At most, he was hoping he might see Him, for Jesus was to cross the city of Jericho. And there He was, crowded by a throng wishing Him to see them, to talk to them, to perform miracles.

But Jesus raises His finger and points towards a certain tree on the roadside:

a. Lk 19:5. Zacchaeus, make haste and come down; for I must stay in thy house today.^a

What a surprise: he who was despised is called by his own name. His prison becomes a festive place. The crowd is astonished and grumbles: “He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.”^b

b. v. 7.

For Zacchaeus, a great journey is beginning. The house into which he receives Jesus is full of treasures. The tax-collector pledges himself to give half of them to the poor, and to restore fourfold to those he might have defrauded. Such are the first steps, still clumsy, of a soul on the path towards conversion, but who dares not make a total gift. The Gospel won't say anything more.

Tradition and legend have largely made up for this suitable discretion. After his conversion, Zacchaeus is said to have become a servant of the Holy Family, and to have married St. Veronica. After her death, he would have journeyed towards Gaul with Lazarus, Martha, and Mary. He would then have retired at the foot of a steep cliff, which then became Roc Amadour in the heart of Gaul, to live there a life of solitude and silence in the company of his Lord.

Whatever the legend may say, Zacchaeus remains a great traveller, not because he left his country, but because, as the patriarchs, he set off on the road. He was thus answering the calling of God which was resounding in his heart as a little music, even if he couldn't yet identify where it would lead him. He understood that he had to set off to “see Jesus,” and that he could not serve two masters at the same time, God and money.

Zacchaeus' house has become the place of a radical choice, a commitment for a whole life; a fearsome place, as we sung in the introit: “How fearsome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and the gate of heaven!”

This text is taken from the Book of Genesis. Jacob, weary after a long road, has fallen asleep and is dreaming. He sees a ladder set up on the earth, the top of which is reaching to

heaven. Angels of God are ascending and descending on it. God is standing near Jacob:

I am the Lord, the God of Abraham thy father and the God of Isaac. The land on which thou liest I will give to thee and to thy descendants.^c

c. Gn 28:13.

When he wakes up, Jacob gives thanks for the presence of God in this place, a presence he wasn't aware of, and for this encounter.

The invitation to take time to encounter God, an invitation coming from the earliest times in mankind's history, is still valid, and is still a challenge, even for a monk, and even after fifty years of profession.

Now, it no longer is in a place that we should adore God, but we should adore Him in spirit and in truth, in all places and all times. Every place, insofar as it is open to this encounter, thus becomes fearsome. But at the time of the digital revolution, who is now fearing this hidden presence? Each place is indeed potentially the gate of heaven, but who is ready to make the effort to cross this threshold?

Among all the places where God is present, a church of stone deserves a special attention. Within it the holy mysteries are performed. In the tabernacle, God is present with His body, His blood, His soul, His divinity. God loves His house. Let's learn to love and visit it.

The Church wants to honour the sanctity of her churches by remembering the day of their consecration. This is the aim of the feast of the Dedication, a feast considered as a feast of the Lord, to such an extent that it is today breaking the Sundays after Pentecost cycle.

Today, we give thanks for the grandiose ceremony of the dedication of our abbey church, on October 5th, 1954. After the Trappist monks had rebuilt the nave during the last decades of the 19th century, such a ceremony was required. The dedication was scheduled to take place on October 5th, 1899, but it was forbidden by an anticlerical government on the very eve of the ceremony. It was therefore up to the very young community of the Solesmes Benedictine monks,

which had just settled in the abbey in 1948, to carry out this dedication.

Today, we also give thanks for the fiftieth anniversary of one of our brothers' monastic profession. A profession is a dedication, an irrevocable consecration, through the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, a radical self-sacrifice of one's own being to God. To the little music of God's calling, answers the chant of the monk, more and more harmonious day after day, which will culminate in a chord on the organ in eternity.

Human life is valuable only insofar as it is the encounter of a man with God. God arranges all events, and sometimes great events, so that this should happen. Such was the case for so many men with the discovery of America by Christopher Colombus on October 12th, 1492. Indeed, the finger of God is pointed on each man. It behoves each man to answer.

Today, the Church celebrates Our Lady del Pilar, thus remembering an apparition of the Blessed Virgin on a pillar in Zaragoza, not very long after the death of Our Lord. The Apostle St. James the Great was disheartened by the lack of fruits of his apostolate. Our Lady comforted him and gave him courage. This was the beginning of Christendom in Spain.

Therefore, keep fostering your heart-to-heart relationship with God. May Our Lady, Virgin and Mother, all-merciful Comfort of the afflicted, guide you on a safe path towards eternity.

Amen.

