



# ANNUNCIATION OF OUR LADY

## SOLEMN PROFESSION

Homily of the Right Reverend Dom Jean PATEAU  
Abbot of Our Lady of Fontgombault  
(Fontgombault, March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2026)

*Ecce virgo concipiet.*  
Behold, a virgin shall conceive.  
(Is 7:14)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,  
My dearly beloved Sons,  
and most especially you, who are going  
to take your solemn vows of religion,

**T**HE OCCURRENCES of the liturgical calendar hold mysteries that do not escape the workings of Providence. Almost every year, as Lent draws to its close, we celebrate the Annunciation to Mary by the angel Gabriel.

In Jerusalem, the hatred that had been simmering for months against the Lord has erupted. The crowd that had accompanied Jesus into the city, exclaiming, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!” now shouts at Pilate the governor, “Crucify him! Crucify him!” Crowds, hatred, shouts, betrayal, injustice—such will be the atmosphere of the days to come. Shame on our humanity, guilty of such an injustice.

In Nazareth, one of the fairest moments in human history is offered to our contemplation. No crowds, no shouts, but the silence of a house where a young woman is living. The angel’s words are but the expression of a love: God’s love for

humanity; a love that will find its rest and bear fruit in the womb of a virgin.

Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb and shalt bring forth a son: and thou shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David His father.<sup>a</sup>

a. *Lk* 1:30-32

The scene concludes with a few words spoken by her who from all eternity has been chosen by God; a few words which were to place her at the heart of the history of salvation, by making her the Mother of God: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it done to me according to thy word.”<sup>b</sup>

b. v. 38

Between the various “Crucify him”, and the one “Behold the handmaid of the Lord”, there lies an abyss. Misery and grandeur of the human heart, so quick to shut itself in hatred, yet equally powerful in uttering a word of love.

In any case, God is never overcome by our wickedness. Throughout the twists and turns of human history and of our individual identities, He remains the all-powerful and merciful God. And if at times His justice must be exercised, it always leaves the door open to a superabundance of love that each of us must welcome and embrace. Noble is the human creature when, after long periods of wandering in darkness, it responds freely and completely to the call full of light of its Creator.

The death of Christ on the Cross amidst the mockery of the soldiers, as well as the virginal conception of the Divine Child in Mary’s maternal womb, are precisely the places where divine love is manifested with its greatest intensity.

This morning’s double profession is also a manifestation of God’s gaze upon your families, for a vocation is always born within a family, and also within your personal lives. An angel probably didn’t come to you, but God, through secret ways He knows, through circumstances He has arranged, and encounters He has brought about, has touched your hearts. You could have remained deaf to His call. You have responded. You have agreed to give yourselves to the Lord, to follow Him

with undivided hearts, to imitate Him in the practice of the Gospel counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

It is said that some day St. Francis, whose 800<sup>th</sup> death anniversary we celebrate this year, was walking through the streets of Assisi, weeping. A man approached him and asked him why. Francis, pointing to a crucifix, replied, “I weep because Love is not loved.” Perhaps this thought has touched your own hearts and moved you to give your lives to love Him who is not loved.

Today, the Church receives in a solemn form this *Fiat*, which it behoves you to keep in its vivid freshness every day of your lives, and until the hour of your deaths.

You are going to pronounce this profession in a place secluded from the world, silent and resembling the house of Mary: the monastic cloister. While the monastery is a privileged place, know that this *Fiat* originates in the even more secluded place of your hearts. It is in its silence that you will listen to the word of God and meditate upon it. It is from its charity that your prayer will draw its strength and rise to heaven like incense. It is through its renunciations that you will chastely practice fraternal love. Finally, it is through it that your entire life and all your activities will be oriented towards the contemplation and service of the Lord, and of your brothers and sisters.

Thirty years ago, on this same day of the Annunciation, St. John Paul II gave consecrated persons the post-synodal exhortation *Vita consecrata*, pointing to the Virgin Mary as a model for their lives:

In the Blessed Virgin Mary, consecrated persons also find a Mother who is altogether unique. [...] Consecrated persons, like John, are called to take the Blessed Virgin Mary to themselves,<sup>c</sup> loving her and imitating her in the radical manner which befits their vocation, and experiencing in return her special motherly love. The Blessed Virgin shares with them the love which enables them to offer their lives every day for Christ and to cooperate with Him in the salvation of the world. Hence a filial relationship to Mary is the royal road

c. Cf. *Jn* 19:27.

*d. Vita consecrata*, n. 28.

to fidelity to one's vocation and a most effective help for advancing in that vocation and living it fully.<sup>d</sup>

Remain children of Mary, in the school of St. Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort. May the Holy Spirit, Who rests upon the heart of Mary, rest upon you. The more silent your heart will be, the more it will hear His gentle whisper and surrender itself, allowing itself to be shaped by Him. Then, following Thérèse of the Child Jesus, you will be missionaries, as the exhortation also affirms:

*e. Cf. Lk 3:6; Is 40:5.*

The consecrated life is at the service of this definitive manifestation of the divine glory, when all flesh will see the salvation of God.<sup>e</sup> The Christian East emphasizes this dimension when it considers monks as angels of God on earth who proclaim the renewal of the world in Christ. In the West, monasticism is the celebration of memory and expectation: memory of the wonders God has wrought, and expectation of the final fulfilment of our hope. Monasticism and the contemplative life are a constant reminder that the primacy of God gives full meaning and joy to human lives, because men and women are made for God, and their hearts are restless until they rest in Him.<sup>f</sup>

*f. Vita consecrata*, n. 27.

Amen.

