

## 2018 Solemn Profession: Br. Bartholomew

**1. As we gather on this Sunday we are still overshadowed by the recent scandals that have rocked the Church.** We may have carried our anger, sorrow and grief into the Church today. And the readings seem to echo our mood. We carry both the unspoiled religion St. James speaks about as well as the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees. There is the gift of the commandments and the Gospel – how near the Lord our God is to us whenever we call him – and the uncleanness of our hearts from which emerge evil intentions and indecency, defiling our families, our communities and the whole Church. **We don't need to run from the sad realities around us but find the real treasure hidden in the field. But we need to have a penetrating gaze like our Brother who is making his Solemn Profession today.**

**2. I remember the day we discovered a deadly snake in our garage.** We were all fearful, anxious and threatened by the presence of this deadly reptile. How did it get there? But today we have stumbled upon an unexpected treasure: a Solemn Profession! We are filled with joy and anticipation and wonder. How did this come about in this young man? Before we open this treasure we must ask ourselves: How did it get here? Before a Christian wedding takes place, we recall that God planned it to be a permanent reminder to his people, you and me, of what happened on the Cross. **Couples don't often think like that!** We are usually focused on the bride and the bridegroom. Rightly so, **but they are signs pointing away from**

**themselves to the Blood of the Cross that unites them in a new and unbreakable bond.**

**3. So also it is impossible to understand a religious community celebrating a Solemn Profession unless we understand a religious community as being, not a human construction, but a gift of the Holy Spirit. Even monks don't always think like this!** We usually focus on the Brother who is making solemn profession. Rightly so, but he is a sign pointing away from himself to be a permanent reminder to the Church of what is happening in heaven. And what is happening there? **The tsunami of mutual self-giving of the saints is caught up in the Thrice Holy Ocean of the mutual self-giving of the Most Holy Trinity.**

**4. In the light of the present scandals that are rocking the Church we may feel very helpless to do anything or change anything.** But the treasure is in our hands. It is a treasure that is both earthly and heavenly. Marriage is an earthly thing. There is no marriage in heaven. A religious community and religious life are about anticipating heavenly things. All are wholly and eternally consecrated to God in heaven! Just as the life of each monk is built upon the life and holiness of his parents, so also the life of bishops and priests and cardinals also depends upon what they received in the embrace of their parents. The humanity of the members of the Church is undivided, the holiness of the members of the Church is also undivided. Because it is the one Body of Christ. It is a body lacerated by our sins and a body radiant with the glory of heaven, the Body of Jesus Christ! **Today in the Church we**

**must keep all the mysteries together in our hearts.** The purification of one leads to the purification of the other! The priesthood and the religious life always come **after** marriage and depend upon it in an incalculable way. **We don't think like this!**

**But what happens if we do?**

**5. A religious thinks like this and understand this treasure!**

He wants to take the love of his parents to a new level of transparency. **Once, he guided his life by the radiance of his parents' mutual but imperfect love. Now, he wishes to radiate the Trinitarian love of God that has come so near to him whenever he calls on them.** "The consecrated life thus becomes one of the tangible seals which the Trinity impresses upon history, so that people can sense with longing the attraction of divine beauty." (Vita Consecrata, 20).

**6. Once, he lived in the midst of the world and its concerns,** forgetting how to live "uncontaminated by the world". Now he decides to live apart from the world so as to be a sign and a living memory to all whom he encounters of something more real than this world: the "wedding feast of the Lamb"! **He points to a treasure "against which the choices and life decisions of every man and woman should be situated"** (Sacramentum Caritatis, 81).

**7. Once, he pointed out the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees in the Church, rightly and sometimes too self-righteously.** Now, he enters into the darkness of that corrupt heart of the human family to do his part, for himself and for all

those he will invisibly accompany on the journey to heaven.

**The religious keeps the lives of married couples, single people, of priests or bishops, cardinals and Popes in his heart so that he may share in the labour of their purification which belongs to the One human and divine Body of Jesus Christ. He consecrates his whole life for this purpose!**

8. All the graces we receive come from the unified life of the Most Holy Trinity and flow back to them. So also all the graces we receive from our Solemn Profession come from the mystery of the community and flow back to it because it is a sign pointing to something greater than itself.

9. So if we let the readings today shape our thoughts and hearts on this Solemn Profession we are renewed in faith, in our hope for the Church, in our love that becomes open to that radical self-giving that, sustained by the sap of the Eucharist, renews the whole Church and drives out evil and keeps us uncontaminated by the world.