

**Homily by Bishop Felipe J. Estévez for the
Solemn Profession of Vows of Brother Joseph
as a Carmelite Hermit, Christoval, Texas
July 20, 2013**



From left Most Rev. Michael D. Pfiefer, OMI,
Bishop Felipe J. Estévez and Bro. Joseph.

St. Paul the great evangelizer, apostle of the Gentiles exhorted to pray unceasingly, to pray at all time. What a gift, what a grace, what a blessing is the call to dedicate one's heart, mind and whole being to pray: praising the triune God and living solely to his glory and the salvation of all.

This adventure of journeying toward Mount Carmel, seeking to love God with all my heart, soul, and whole being, to become a true adorer, worshipper of the true God is both a challenge of self-giving love and the greatest blessing. Congratulations to *each* hermit of this community.

Scripture reminds us today Elijah's greatest desolation under the groom tree where he prayed for death: "This is enough oh Lord, take my life..." God hastened to help him sending Gabriel to touch him and ordering him to guide him to stand on the mountain before the Lord passed by. Be still Elijah. Pay attention to the tiny whispering sound deep within you in the silence of your heart. God is... *Solo Dios Basta*, says St. Therese.

In the journey towards Jerusalem, the apostles were to encounter their greatest desolation, facing the crucifixion of their master, the agony on the cross. On the mount of Tabor, they are blessed with the encounter of the transfigured Christ endorsed by his beloved Father, "This is my son, my chosen one, listen to him." He does encourage them by giving them a taste of the hidden glory within him. As St. John of the cross reminds us the Father had but one word to say, his Son, and that was enough. The Father said it all by revealing the Son to us.

Prayer is being attuned to the Gospel, and like Mary, the true icon of the praying church, we try to keep the word in the heart, as a source of living water. For the Gospel is the truth and by

abiding in the truth we attain the true freedom of God's children, thus praying unceasingly makes us truly fulfilled disciples of the Lord.

When the Prior, Father Fabian invited me to preach, he asked me to give "the homily about consecrated life." Last May 8, Pope Francis addressed the participants of the International Union of Superior Generals. As it is his custom, Pope Francis organized his thoughts into three points. Being a pope who personally had embraced consecrated life, he talked about 1) centrality of Christ and his Gospel; 2) authority as a service of love and 3) thinking in and with Mother Church.

Pope Francis began by affirming that a vocation is always an initiative of God. Our response requires us to make an exodus from ourselves centering our lives in Christ and his Gospel. This choice leads to a path of adoration and service in witnessing obedience, poverty and chastity. Pope Francis exhorts the consecrated to witness authority and obedience by "accompanying, understanding, helping and loving," keeping our gaze fixed on the cross.

Lastly the Holy Father teaches that ecclesiology is a fundamental dimension of consecrated life for it is absurd to live with Christ and without the church or of following Jesus outside the hierarchical Mother Church. Brother Joseph, Pope Francis invites you to follow Christ with deep "*sentire cum ecclesia*" thinking in and with Mother Church. In fact, your hermitage witnesses this dimension by wanting your Diocesan bishop to preside at this event of grace.

I bet that Brother Joseph's solemn profession was scheduled as near as possible to the great feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, as a sign of recognition of the importance of Mary's intercession for the Hermitage and her motherly love for each hermit, for Brother Joseph and especially his family.

I pray that the most beautiful flower of Mount Carmel, the Stella Maris, the woman of the Eucharist, leads us all to her Son who is also at the same time the Son of the Eternal Father, Jesus Christ. He becomes really present in the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ. May the Holy Spirit enkindle in our hearts his merciful love, and remain with us forever.