

Simple Profession of Br. Celestine  
September 14, 2020

Feast of the Holy Cross

“With their patience worn out by the journey, the people complained against God and Moses, “Why have you brought us up from Egypt to die in this desert...” How soon the Israelites had forgotten the miraculous works that the Lord had performed to gain them their freedom, the freedom to follow Him who had called them to be His people, freedom to delight in His care, freedom to experience His boundless love. How quickly the Israelites lost sight of God’s assurances of a new land, a land over-flowing with blessings, and as well, His promises that He would always be faithful, to protect them from their enemies, to guide them down to the thousandth generation, to bless their offspring, and make their descendants as numerous as the countless stars of the sky.

The Israelites forgot their God, and the deeds worked on their behalf... they doubted, and so they were overcome with the fears and trials of life which, once they abandoned their Lord, they could not manage on their own.

The words of the psalmist in our responsorial song provide the antidote to the Israelites foolish and tragic insensibleness. Br. Celestine, these very words are as well, ones that the Lord confides to your heart this day. “Do not forget the works of the Lord.” With instruction that recalls to our minds the opening of Saint Benedict’s Rule, the psalmist points out to the Israelite people the way back from doubt, faithlessness and difficulty.....the way leading to fidelity and hope. In psalm 78 we hear: “Hearken my people to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable and utter mysteries from of old...the Most High God was their redeemer...yet their hearts were

not steadfast toward Him...But He, being merciful, forgave their sin and destroyed them not.”

These are strong words, indeed rather sobering, yet they should give all of us much hope, for they make clear the everlasting promise of our Lord that in Him alone, we will find our salvation.

We witness this evening Br. Celestine, about to take vows of stability, obedience, and conversion, vows that will make God the very center of all his hopes, and plans, and dreams.

Br. Celestine has conveyed to me that it was here in our abbey church, in our blessed sacrament chapel surrounded by the magnificent mosaic created by our good friend Sylvia Nicolas, that he first felt the moving of his heart toward a vocation to this monastic community. That mosaic, depicts Christ hung upon the cross, reaching down to lift up Adam and Eve and all mankind, raising them beyond sin and death and pointing out to them by His sacrifice, the way to life. The cross in the mosaic is seen to pour forth living waters that nourish us all on our path to eternity, our journey back to the Father who awaits all, ever respecting our freedom, yet most anxious to take us into his embrace of love, a love that will never end. Sometime take a close look at that mosaic in the chapel, at those living waters gushing forth from the base of the cross upon which Christ hangs, waters offered in abundance to nourish and strengthen what is good, and what is right, and what is true in every soul ever created by the hand of God.

As Moses bronze serpent preserved the lives of those who had strayed but repented, so the life-giving waters of Christ’s cross provide strength and hope to all of us washed clean of original sin, and promised forgiveness of our misdeeds through the sacrament of reconciliation.

Br. Celestine in every moment, and in every circumstance of your monastic life, see your vows of obedience, and stability, and conversion as cords joining you, uniting you to the cross of Christ, from which will flow this life-giving water which will sustain you through every difficulty, will refresh you in every triumph, will wash from you any form of uncleanness or sin, will enable you throughout your monastic life to stand steadfast at the foot of the cross and offer everything you are, everything you may become to your savior.

Look to Saint Benedict's Rule to guide you in your vows, seeing stability in this community as a way of placing all hope in Christ, obedience to your superiors or to your brothers, as offering your acceptance of the Lord's will, and conversion as a steady and constant conforming of yourself to God's plan for you. It is the purpose of these three vows to allow you to take on what at first may appear a daunting task. But if you stay true to what you will promise, you will find that with time, as St. Benedict instructs his disciples, you will begin to run on the path of God's commandments, your heart overflowing with the inexpressible delight of love.

To Celestine's mother Karen, and father Brian, to his sisters Kali and Tara, and to his grandparents Jim and Janet, we offer our congratulations and gratitude. We thank you for the love and guidance provided over many years that have helped bring Celestine to this day. May your prayers for him assist him in his vocation, that he may prefer nothing to the love of Christ, and may Christ bring us all together in life everlasting.