

Our readings at Mass just a few hours ago, as Fr. Anselm has suggested, could hardly be more appropriate for two men taking a further step to search out the Lord, to approach more closely this God who calls us to Himself, and to His way. The gospel of this Sunday relates the story of two of John the Baptist's disciples hearing the dramatic words, "Behold the Lamb of God," spoken by the Baptist, upon his seeing Jesus. Immediately John's two disciples followed after Jesus to learn more, to see and hear more, prepared to accept and follow the one for whom John had come to prepare the way. Michael and Douglas, we hope that you have in different ways and circumstances already found the Lamb of God, Christ, in this community. As you enter novitiate, may you move with greater determination, and even stronger purpose to follow Him.

We know from the Rule of Benedict that the would-be monastic disciple is first instructed to "Listen with the ear of your heart."

And so it was in our Old Testament reading at Mass this morning, when Eli finally understood that it was the Lord who was calling the youth Samuel. Eli instructed Samuel: "If you are called, reply, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.' "

It is to listen, in the fullest sense of that word, that we come to the cloister. We are meant to set aside everything at the entrance to the monastery, our self-will, our plans of self-determination, our old ways, our improper ways of loving and choosing. All this is given over that we might listen, and better hear the Word of the Lord, that alone can lead us through those steps of humility that will make of us men of God. In our monastic life the Lord's instruction comes to us in a myriad of ways, but especially through the varied needs of our brother monks. How carefully we must listen with every aspect of our being in all situations, perhaps dozens each day, that we might see beneath the not-always-pleasant appearances of things to their deeper meaning, and so more willingly respond, "Here I am Lord." Ready always to follow and serve the one we came here to love.

St. Pope John Paul once celebrated a Mass to mark the reception of the habit at the Daughters of Divine Charity. He later reflected: "The Church...is, so to speak, '*esse ad Patrem*' ('being towards the Father'). The sisters," John Paul continued, "who....choose Christ for their bridegroom, in a special way enter into this '*esse ad Patrem*' not only personally, but they also impress the sign of this '*esse*' ('being') on the life of our entire society. Hence they are much needed by the Church and in the Church." How true that is for us Benedictines as well. Michael and Douglas know that you are much needed by the Church.

Michael, you have chosen as your name Titus. You described how well Titus did the work of evangelization just as Saint Paul, though never achieving the notoriety or status of Paul. The guide for Titus was always: Let me do the work the Lord calls me to do, and that will be enough. Is that not a wonderful example of '*esse ad Patrem*' ('being towards the Father')? Titus, may that same generous and humble impulse mark your every monastic deed.

Douglas, you have chosen Dunstan as your name. Dunstan was abbot of Glastonbury Abbey, and during his tenure he restored the monastery's order and discipline by his dedication, and by his wisdom. May those qualities mark your own search for God. Glastonbury during Dunstan's time became famous for its learning. Later Dunstan became Archbishop of Canterbury, a predecessor of Anselm by just a few decades, both buried together in the old Cathedral. Dunstan's life of prayer and serious study exemplifies as well our task of '*esse ad Patrem*.'

May each day find both of you Titus and Dunstan listening mindfully, as every new day brings God's word to you, as every new situation calls you to '*esse ad Patrem*' ('being towards the Father'). May you both always respond eagerly and enthusiastically: "Speak Lord, your servant is listening."