

20<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time  
Profession of Temporary Vows  
Aug. 17, 2025

Jer. 38:4-6, 8-10; Ps. 133:1-2; Hebr. 12: 1-4; Luke 12:49-53

“Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses. . . “

You have attracted quite a crowd of witnesses. You yourselves, the seven of you, constitute a crowd of your own. Add the three postulants soon-to-be novices and the two other brothers – Br. Kolbe and Br. Nathaniel -- and you almost fill the monastery yourselves! You doubled our food budget last year, but this year with the new novices you will fill up all the bedrooms. We are 34 monks living in a monastery of 35 bedrooms. But add the young men here on retreat to discern a vocation to the monastery. Add your family and friends. Add the friends from the Prep School and University communities. Add all the many people who have over the years come to think of Our Lady of Dallas as their spiritual home. And you have indeed attracted quite a crowd of witnesses surrounding us, gathered here to observe and thus to know what is taking place today, and then to bear witness to it.

But the author of Hebrews does not speak of a crowd. He speaks of a cloud. I don't think he is using cloud simply as a figure of speech for a large group, as the grammar books say. He is referring, I think, to the cloud that sits atop Mt. Sinai when God comes down to speak to Moses, the cloud that precedes the Israelites by day when they wander in the desert, the cloud that fills the temple built by Solomon, the cloud that descends upon Jesus at the Transfiguration, when his Father declares, “This is my Beloved Son with whom I am well pleased. Listen to him.” The author of Hebrews is speaking of a cloud that is the very presence of God.

And in God we have present to us all who have persevered in their faith that God is preparing a lasting home, a heavenly homeland. In the preceding chapter the author of Hebrews runs through all the great figures of the Old Testament. Here on this historic day, we can't help but think of all our family members and friends who have passed out of this world, persevering in faith in their heavenly homeland. We think also of St. Benedict and St. Bernard and all the monastic saints of our Order. We think of your patron saints -- Barnabas, Jerome, Elijah, Anselm, Gideon, Charbel, and in the case of Br. Michael of a patron Archangel. We think of the Hungarians who persevered heroically in their faith after World War II, facing imprisonment and torture and martyrdom, yet persevering in faith that God is leading them to a heavenly homeland. We think of the 24 Hungarian founders of this house now buried in our crypt and, of course, of our two surviving Hungarian seniors, Fr. Julius and Fr. Bernard who are with us in choir today. Here in the presence of God, we do indeed have a cloud of witnesses surrounding us.

And we are all called to bear witness, to set aside the weight of our sins, and like Jesus to strive for the joy set before us. The brothers will be witnessing to God's plan to lead them and all men and women to their heavenly homeland by taking classes at UD, teaching in the Prep School and, in a new initiative, by working with Mother Theresa of Calcutta's

Missionaries of Charity and teaching catechism to the confirmation classes at St. James' Parish. We are also blessed that as a community we can send Fr. John to Hungary for this next semester to see if there are any ways that we could possibly contribute to the revival of Cistercian life there, to bear witness as Cistercian men in Hungary to the joy of the heavenly homeland to which God is calling us all.

Rejoicing in this cloud of witnesses surrounding us, may the newly professed brothers and all of us bear witness to that joy that lies ahead of us in Christ.