

**Solemn Profession of Brother Clive Camilleri, OFM**  
**Province of St. Paul the Apostle, Malta**  
**September 14, 2016**  
**Homily – Bro. Michael A. Perry, OFM**

“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him” (Jn. 3:17).

In his *Letter to the Entire [Franciscan] Order*, St. Francis of Assisi urged those who wished to follow in the footprints of the Lord Jesus Christ to enter into a life-long love affair with God, and to keep open their minds and hearts to the voice of God speaking everywhere and at all times. Francis writes:

“Listen, sons of the Lord and my brothers, pay attention to my words. Incline the ear of your heart and obey the voice of the Son of God. Observe His commands with your whole heart and fulfill his counsels with a perfect mind. Give praise to Him because He is good; exalt Him by your deeds; for this reason *He has sent you into the whole world: that you may bear witness to His voice in word and deed* and bring everyone to know that there is no one who is all-powerful except Him” (Francis of Assisi, 1225-26, *A Letter to the Entire Order*).

The entire journey of faith is about learning to listen to God’s voice, discerning the message that God has for each and every one of his beloved disciples, and responding to the invitation in a way that inspires authenticity, ignites passion for the Gospel, and leads us on the path of mercy, reconciliation, and love. Thus, what we are doing tonight is joining with Bro. Clive as he make his public commitment to live an authentically human, Christian, and Franciscan life, filled with passion for the Gospel and an unbounded love for all who God loves.

When I asked Clive to describe to me his journey of faith, his coming to hear the voice of God calling from within his heart, and the steps he took in attempting to respond to the voice of the Spirit of God, he told me about the centrality of the cross in his life. He spoke about the experience of the life of faith experienced through his parents, and all members of the family, and also about the role his parish played in his faith formation. He spoke about beginning his professional life working with cloth and shoes. At some point, he decided to advance to computer and information technology with the hope that this would not only advance his career but also answer the growing echo of a voice resounding within his heart, a voice that would not - indeed could not - be silenced. It was only through the undertaking of a spiritual pilgrimage to the Holy Land that Clive finally began to decipher who it was speaking to him, and to what new way of life he was being summoned. It is for this reason that Clive chose to make his Solemn Profession in the Order of Friars Minor on this particular feast, the Exaltation of the Cross.

Clive, you know only too well that the journey of St. Francis of Assisi, the founder of our Order, also began with a voice resounding within his head and heart, a voice that

could not be silenced. He also tried to run from the voice but it would not be silenced. He found himself being drawn to the cross at the dilapidated chapel/church of San Damiano where he reached out to embrace – and to be embraced – by the crucified yet glorious image of Jesus Christ. And as Francis tells us, the same voice that brought him to the foot of cross in San Damiano is what brought him face to face with crucified humanity, in the person of the leper whom Francis met ‘on the road’.

The biblical texts that we have heard proclaimed tonight seek to draw each of us who are disciples of the risen Lord Jesus into the heart of the mystery of God’s love for all of humanity, for all that God has created. In his letter to the Philippians, St. Paul speaks about a God who humbles self, takes human form, and sets about to serve those whom he has created in order that all might be awakened to the possibility of a mercy and love that are limitless. This same theme is brought to completion in the Gospel text where Jesus transmits a message of hope to Nicodemus, one of his followers: “For God so love the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life” (Jn. 3:15). This is the essential meaning of the nature of Christian discipleship in the Lord Jesus, namely, to be someone who has been loved, forgiven, and invited to experience a holy newness of life that heals and transforms everything. Life, the world, and our entire way of seeing and living are transformed. Nothing remains the same as before.

Clive, I believe you know exactly of what I am speaking. You also have come to experience and to believe that God seeks to offer you the gift of new life in and through your solemn profession in the Order of Friars Minor. You have expressed your willingness to embrace the three evangelical counsels of our way of life:

- Obedience: a willingness to listen with open heart to the voice of God speaking in the world, speaking in and through the collective discernment of brothers in the Order, in the Church, and speaking in his own life experience;
- Chastity – that form of love, which is not exclusive but rather that is expansive, opening wide the human heart so that it might embrace all whom God sends into Clive’s life in a free and self-dispossessing manner; and
- Living without Anything of One’s Own – a simplicity of life that seeks to be possessed by God’s love, to be set free to love all in a manner that is unencumbered, allowing Clive to embrace an itinerant – missionary - way of the Gospel.

If I have understood correctly, this is what you, Bro. Clive, have come to do this evening. [ASK CLIVE TO RESPOND.] You have come to announce to those gathered here in this church, to your brothers in the Province and Order, and to all people everywhere in the world your total commitment to embrace life as Jesus embraces life, and to seek always to live according to the Gospel vision proposed by Jesus and expressed in the *Rule and Life* of the Friars’ Minor.

The great English author and admirer of St. Francis, G. K. Chesterton, once wrote:

A man will not roll in the snow for a stream of tendency by which all things fulfill the law of their being. He will not go without food in the name of something, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness. He will do things like this, or pretty [much] like this, under quite a different impulse. He will do these things when he is in love. The first fact to realize about St Francis is involved with the first fact with which his story starts; that when he said from the first that he was a Troubadour, and said later that he was a Troubadour of a newer and nobler romance, he was not using a mere metaphor, but understood himself much better than the scholars understand him. He was, to the last agonies of asceticism, a Troubadour. *He was a Lover. He was a lover of God and he was really and truly a lover of men; possibly a much rarer mystical vocation.* (G.K. Chesterton, 1923, *St. Francis of Assisi*, chap. 1, <http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks09/0900611.txt>).

Clive, in the name of the universal brotherhood of the Franciscan Order, I challenge and invite you to be a 'troubadour' of God's love, mercy, and compassion. I urge you never to allow anyone or anything to distract you from the holy vocation you have embraced. I offer my prayer for you, as do all of us gathered here today – your Franciscan brothers, your mother and father, Anthony and Helen, your brother Jason and his family, your sister Diane and family, and your grandmother Josephine, your friends, that you might continue to listen deeply and attentively to the voice of the One who has loved you from eternity to eternity, the one who has called you by name for the sake of love, and that you might pursue the Kingdom dream God has in store for your life and for the life of the world. I pray that your love for the crucified Jesus will never decrease but only increase. May your life be marked by the same compassion, mercy, and love that you have received as gift from God and for which you have chosen to consecrate your life entirely to God and to his Kingdom project.