

Brother Ryan Carlsen, A.A. with his family

On Saturday, January 6th, 2018 the Chapel of the Holy Spirit at Assumption College was the site of great celebration. Bro.Ryan Carlsen, A.A. professed his final vows as an Augustinian of the Assumption. The celebrant for the liturgy was Fr. Dennis Gallagher, A.A. Provincial. Fr. Dennis received Bro. Ryan's vows in the name of Fr. Benoit Griere, A.A., Superior General of the congregation. The liturgy was followed by a festive reception attended by Bro. Ryan's family, community, Lay Assumptionists and invited guests. Congratulations to Bro. Ryan!

Homily during the Religious Profession Mass of Brother Ryan Carlsen, A.A.

Ryan, what you are doing today is full of hope.

We know that hope is a theological virtue, which comes from God, but it is so good when it is embodied in the lives of flesh and blood human beings - that flesh of ours which is so susceptible to distraction, to aimless wandering, to looking for love in all the wrong places.

What you are doing today, turning your face toward Jerusalem, so to speak, anchoring your life in the one thing necessary, is, I want to say, “over the top” hopeful.

You have said often enough, Ryan, that in the Catholic faith you have found the pearl of great price.

You found it – you didn’t stumble upon it. One has to look for that pearl, it’s not going to show up like finding a ten dollar bill along the road. One important dimension of today’s hope is the integrity of your search. It’s been real and it has come at great cost…

The readings for today’s liturgy are quite helpful in delineating both the seeking and the finding in the journey that has brought you to this day.

In the first reading from Ezekiel, I was particularly struck by this verse, referring to those among the people of Israel who were exiles, strangers in a strange land: “Thus says the Lord, Though I removed them from among the nations, and though I scattered them among the countries, yet I have been a sanctuary to them in the countries where they have gone.”

Forgive me if this interpretation is off base, but one thing that happens when we find the pearl of great price is that we come to “read” our lives leading up to that finding in a different way. We come to understand that even when we felt as though we were far from the goal, that God was somehow there, a kind of sanctuary that protected us in those times when we were away from home. I’m reminded of St. Paul’s encouragement to give thanks for everything.

The second reading from the Acts of the Apostles speaks of the quite specific and concrete form which you have committed your life and which will be sealed by this profession of vows. It’s the life lived in common. I think you’ve had a pretty keen sense that what sometimes passes for the common life in our individualistic culture is a poor substitute, thin porridge, if you

want, compared to the life of the early Christian community described by St. Luke in the Acts. The sharing of everything, from our socks to our suffering, is intended to be the very form of our life. I have a sense that you can continue to help us with this. As I told the Superior General in my report to him – I'm telling tales out of school here - Ryan wins you over by his charity.

The Gospel, of course, is the piece de resistance. Jesus Christ is the pearl of great price. What decisively gives shape to your life – and to which the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience give witness – is that you have joined your life to that of Jesus Christ. Understand the word join here in the most emphatic, the fullest meaning of the word: Life for me
is
Christ, who is himself poor, chaste and obedient.

On the level of experience, why is this such a pearl? Because your life is broken open, it's life as life God intended life to be, as so graciously revealed to us in the life of his Son Jesus. It means losing yourself time and time again. What as adventure this is! What untold depths there are, I want to say what joy there is in living life this way.

The witness of religious consecration for the Church and for the world is to help others - and for us to help one another - in setting our face toward Jerusalem, in taking up with courage this life of self-gift. Thank you for so resolutely following the path of discipleship, and for the hope so clearly manifest in this profession day.

Fr. Dennis Gallagher, provincial of the North American region of the Assumptionists