

My dear brethren,

In this celebration please allow me in a special way to turn to our brothers who are with us to say their definitive 'yes to God' in the Teresian Carmel: Justin from Philippines, John from Vietnam, Dominic Savio from Korea, Lukhirma and Jignesh Kumar from India and Jean Pierre from Madagascar. Your very persons, your vocations, your presence here in Rome to complete the decisive choice of your life speak much more than my words. They tell us that the Teresian Carmel is alive, that the Saint whose feast we are celebrating today is not only a great figure of the past, but a model of Christian and religious life that young people of today, who come from the different parts of the world, feel called to imitate. This cannot fail to fill us with joy and hope, but at the same time it asks us to know how to read these signs in order to respond adequately to the grace and faithful love of God. This is our vocation, which our brothers wish to live, our style of staying with the Lord, of being brothers, of witnessing and announcing the Gospel. That which unites us is certainly much more and still more profound than that which distinguishes us: the cultures, the languages, the social contexts, the style of life of different circumscriptions. Moreover, in a globalized and densely interconnected world, like ours, traditional diversities - with their richness and complexity - seem to give way to a homogeneous condition, which reduces us to a single dimension, namely, economics." We all become the same, as producers and consumers, but that does not mean that we become "all brothers" (*Fratelli Tutti*), to borrow the opening words of Pope Francis's latest encyclical. More and more, fraternity is not a given, it is not something securely achieved; rather, it is a goal towards which we need to walk, knowing that it is an uphill and counter-current journey which requires much firmness, a clear and strong motivation, capable of resisting the contrary tendencies and temptations that drive us back into the isolation of a mentality that transforms everything into objects that are to be possessed and consumed.

You, dear brothers, are here to make the Solemn Profession. In time, you will be ordained deacons, then priests and then you will begin to carry out your pastoral work. That is all beautiful; it is a richness which can bring growth both for you and for the many persons who will encounter you. But from where will your minds receive light? What will move your will? On what will you make your joy depend and on what will your sadness depend? For whom will you do all this? I don't know if you have asked yourselves these questions. I don't even know if you will ask them in the first years of your ministry. These are perhaps questions that arise when one is a little older in years, when one is no longer worried about accomplishing something, but one is seriously confronted with what one is or has become. Or, when shocking events occur in life that force us to ask ourselves questions of this kind. The pandemic we are experiencing can be one of these events, with the restrictions to which it obliges us, with the cancellation of our programs and the uncertainty that reigns supreme over our present and the immediate future. The pandemic is an exceptional event, but there are far more frequent and ordinary facts that put us to the test, which test the strength of our being ordained ministers, religious, Christians and reach even our flesh. You know that in the Carmelite tradition one of the symbols used is that of the fiery arrow, the *ignea sagitta*. God's grace sometimes assumes this form of an arrow that pierces the shield, armour, iron mesh and reaches the flesh and it is in this contact with the flesh that our journey takes a turn, begins a new stage, a process that goes deeper and higher.

My dear brothers, in pronouncing your final vows shortly, know that you are not completing a formation cycle, especially intellectual, after which the independent exercise of a professional activity will come, from which to receive prestige and gain. In saying that you give yourselves with all your heart to this family initiated by Saint Teresa, you choose to become nothing other than Discalced

brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel. Who among us can say that he knows what exactly today the life of a Discalced brother of Mary is like, here in Rome or India or Vietnam or Madagascar or in the many other places where the Teresian Carmel is present? Externally, there is no doubt that you will be faced with very different situations. But internally, I really believe that the dangers and opportunities will not be all that different. A few days ago a priest of this community of Teresianum, as he was speaking of St. John of the Cross, used a beautiful image: colouring the walls of one's own mind. It all depends on this: what colours will you paint the walls, not of your room or your office, but of your mind, of your soul? And I would add that in order to choose the right colours, those of a theological life, the colours of faith, hope and charity, we must fight and resist the colours that almost automatically spread on our innermost walls, the colours, as John of the Cross would say, of the world, of the flesh, of the devil. If there is no serious and constant discernment, an open and sincere encounter with the people whom the Lord has placed beside us, as brothers and as priests, if there is no time and space for silence and listening to the living God in one's interiority, you can be assured that your minds will be coloured and furnished according to the wishes and expectations of the world, even if there is around you a world clothed in liturgical vestments and resounding in ecclesiastical discourses.

Being religious has never been something one could take for granted, much less today. Neither in five nor in nine years of the initial formation is it learned. It is the effort of an entire life. To this effort you choose to dedicate yourselves by making solemn profession this evening, on this day when the Church venerates one of our brothers, a brother recognised as doctor of the universal Church, but particularly venerated and loved by us as father and teacher of Carmelite life. My wish is that you will often return to open the book of his works, to drink from his source, which is also ours, to bathe your minds in the light of his celestial and divine wisdom.