

**HOMILY OF HIS EXCELLENCY ARCHBISHOP CHRISTOPHE PIERRE
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
MASS OF PERPETUAL PROFESSION
DOMINICAN SISTERS OF SAINT CECILIA CONGREGATION
CATHEDRAL OF THE INCARNATION
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE
JULY 25, 2022**

Your Excellency Bishop Mark Spaulding, Prioress General Mother Grace Anna Neenan, the Community of the Dominican Sisters of Saint Cecilia, my brother priests, religious, lay faithful, I am very happy to join with you today for this celebration of the Eucharist and the profession of perpetual vows of these eight Sisters:

Sister Maria Grace
Sister Maria Beatriz
Sister Monica Marie
Sister Mary Martin
Sister Teresa Joy
Sister Mary Imelda
Sister Madeline Rose
Sister Mary Judith

As the personal representative of the Holy Father to the Church in the United States, I express the spiritual closeness and paternal affection of Pope Francis to these Sisters, their families and friends, and your Community. Be assured of my prayerful best wishes and heartfelt congratulations.

As we heard in the Opening Collect for this Mass, religious profession is a particular way of living out the fundamental vocation of baptism – the following of Christ as a disciple.

Through the profession of perpetual vows today you consecrate yourself to the following of Christ in the manner of life inspired by Saint Dominic de Guzman. It is said of Saint Dominic that he always spoke to God or about God – by fervently preaching and teaching the Gospel, and zealously seeking the salvation of souls. These are the hallmarks of this life.

Eight hundred years after the foundation of the Order, the Dominican way of life still offers the individual, the Church, and the world, a unique path to holiness.

This life is communal: Saint Dominic recognized that to be a fervent teacher one first has to be a fervent witness. The credibility of the Word that is taught and proclaimed is sustained by the lived Word of the teacher and preacher.

The Community is where the Word who is Christ is first taught, lived, and celebrated. The common life and the vows lived joyfully witness to the love of Christ. This love gives meaning and strength to your words and actions. Teaching and preaching are most effective when it is a lived experience through the joyful witness of your Dominican Life.

This life is contemplative: To preach and teach Christ, one has to be one with Christ. Saint Dominic was one with Christ through contemplation.

To transform minds and hearts by the Gospel message, Saint Dominic emphasized the study of revealed truth – the truth who is Christ. He also believed if one is going to speak about spiritual truths, one must be immersed in the source and summit of the spiritual life of the Church – the Eucharist and liturgical prayer.

Through prayer and study, eternal truths are learned and embraced in a new and deeper way. In this sustained encounter with Christ, one comes to possess and pass on a teaching that is not only intellectual understanding, but a personal and living experience of the mystery of salvation. This is expressed by the great Dominican teacher, St. Thomas Aquinas: *to contemplate and to give to others the fruits of contemplation.*

This life is apostolic: Authentic and joyful witness to Christ, and teaching and preaching formed by contemplation and informed by study, are the distinctive characteristics of your apostolic service and the proclamation of the Gospel for the salvation of souls - particularly for the religious formation of youth in the Catholic faith, the strengthening of the faith in their families and in the local Churches where you serve, and in all efforts evangelization.

A vibrant proclamation of the Gospel brings people to know the true meaning and purpose of life found in Jesus Christ, an understanding of the difficulties that must be overcome to realize that purpose, and confidence in the transforming power of the grace of Christ to overcome the difficulties.

A teacher who is zealous for the salvation of souls and lives the Gospel message in an authentic and joyful manner convinces people of the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, and invites them to journey on the pathway to genuine and lasting happiness in Christ – and always be mindful to accompany them on this journey.

Pope Francis in his homily for the closing of the Jubilee Year of the 800th Anniversary of the Dominican Order spoke about this apostolic service: “we give thanks to the Father for the work that Saint Dominic, full of the light and the salt of Christ, accomplished 800 years ago; a work at the service of the Gospel, preached with words and with his life; a work that, with the grace of the Holy Spirit, has helped so many men and women to not lose themselves in the midst of the ‘carnival’ of worldly curiosity, but rather sense the taste of sound doctrine, the taste of the Gospel...”

May the Holy Spirit fill you with the same zeal of Saint Dominic for the Truth and for the salvation of souls. Commending these Sisters, their families, and all gathered for this Profession Mass to Saint Dominic, Saint Cecilia, and the Immaculate Virgin, His Holiness Pope Francis imparts his Apostolic Blessing.