

Reverend Monsignori, the Mother General, the Provincial Superior, Reverent Fathers, Sisters, dear Joselyn, the Edathil Family and my dear brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ!

We have gathered here to celebrate a person's total life dedication to the Lord, to His Church and to His people. God in His infinite love, called one of our daughters, Jocelyn, to glorify Him through a life lived in total abandonment to Him. Jocelyn, with the force of her faith and love for the Lord, responded generously to this call. Consequently, today we are celebrating her first religious profession.

Many of you are new to this liturgy of the religious profession in the Malankara Catholic Church. One major characteristic of this liturgy is its rich scriptural content. There is a rather lengthy exhortation that the bishop gives to the candidate. This exhortation is replete with scriptural passages. The underlying theme of all these biblical passages is the need to belong totally to the Lord and the spirit of self-denial required of the candidate for the same. The candidate is advised to make God her real possession and in order to possess Him, she has to choose the narrow gate, because the gate that is wide leads to destruction and it is preferred by many. Towards the end of this ceremony, the new sister will be vested with her new uniform. The prayer that accompanies every step of this vesting brings out powerfully how dearly she has to belong to the Lord and how profoundly she must be prepared for denying herself. So religious life concerns a fundamental choice in life, a choice for God, a choice to follow the Lord in a very exciting and challenging way, a choice that requires deep faith, real courage and total trust in the Lord. Basically it is a call to share in the destiny of the Son of Man, who, in order to make us rich, made Himself poor.

Consecrated life is a constant reminder to the world that human life transcends worldly realities and all worldly achievements. As a person consecrated totally to the Lord, Joselyn assumes the three basic vows of chastity, poverty and obedience. All these vows are basically a reflection of her fundamental option for God, in terms of her relationship to persons, things and herself. In a world where people tend to approach and assess everything

including other human persons in terms of their usefulness and personal advantage, the vow of chastity teaches that the true worth of the human person consists in his/her ability to be loved, not to be used. In a world that is torn apart by selfishness and hatred, consecrated life is a sign of the undefeatable potentiality of unconditional love. In a world where people tend to be obsessed with possessing more and more for oneself, the vow of poverty teaches that it is more important **to be** than **to have** – being is more important than having. In a world that is subdued by blatant materialism and consumerism and by the obsession with extravagance and unlimited enjoyment, consecrated life points to the ultimate significance and value of enriching human life by belonging totally to God. In a world where personal satisfaction and fulfilment are almost equated with egoism and self-centeredness, the vow of obedience points to the need of self-denial and abandonment to God. In a world where people crave and compete for power, dominance and recognition, consecrated life is a disturbing reminder of the power of forgiveness and of service in humility. These vows together reflect the joy of belonging to the Lord and His people. The life of a consecrated person is to be constantly permeated by this joy, joy in the Lord. As Pope Francis mentioned in his letter to the consecrated men and women in the year of consecrated life, “a consecrated person, through his/her life, radiates the joy and beauty of living the Gospel and following Christ to the full”.

As I understand, Jocelyn, in answering to the call of the Lord, has been strongly influenced by the spirituality of Servant of God Mar Ivanios, the founder of the religious congregation to which she belongs now. The most fundamental spiritual ideal of this great prophet of Church unity was attaining God by increasingly sharing in His holiness. The ultimate aim of all that one does as a consecrated person or even as a believer, is to have an ever deeper share in the holiness of God. And I know, how much Jocelyn is burning with the desire to live this spiritual ideal of the great Father of our Church. Today, as we know, is the feast of the Transfiguration. Apostles Peter, John and James had a glimpse of the real glory of the Son of God, which experience turned out to be deeply self-transformative in their own

lives. Jocelyn has entered the process of transforming herself into the identity of a true bride of the Eternal Bridegroom. May God continue to bless her.

We are very glad that God has called Jocelyn to be a religious sister. As we know, Jocelyn will be the first religious sister from and for a Church of Indian origin in America. The Malankara Catholic Church and the Bethany Congregation are thankful to God for the gift of her consecrated life. We thank God for this young person' depth of faith and courage in sparing her beautiful life for the Lord and His Church. We are sure, with all the gifts that God has so generously bestowed on her, her consecrated life will be an enrichment to the Church and to the Bethany Congregation and she will be instrumental in inspiring many people in finding their way to God and in confirming many others in their call. We also hope that her magnificent example will help to promote vocations to religious life in our Eparchy.

The Eparchy is deeply indebted to the dear parents and family members of Jocelyn for having made such a wonderful sacrifice for the Church. As you know, the first incardinated priest of our Eparchy is Father Michael Edathil, the younger brother of Jocelyn, who proudly confesses that Jocelyn had a major share in inspiring his own call to priesthood. I thank Mr. Philip Edathil and Mrs. Rajamma for having given two of their beloved children for the service of the Church. You can rejoice in the Lord about the way the Lord uses your family at a crucial phase of the growth of our Church in America. I also thank Mrs. Aileen and Mr. John, the siblings of Father Michael and Jocelyn. As we know, family is the nursery of vocations. Our primary responsibility as parents and family members is to create an atmosphere in our families, where our children can grow as God's children, where our children can imbibe the values of the Gospel. I hope and pray that more parents and families among us will be instrumental in inspiring their children to embrace priestly and religious life in the Church. I also congratulate our parish community at Philadelphia that prepared the context for the faith formation of Jocelyn and Father Michael. During this service of the Profession, let us pray ardently for Jocelyn, that she may always remain a worthy bride of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen