

Thus we come back to where we started: we are pilgrims in this world, 'here we have no abiding city'. This knowledge should give us freedom—that freedom of heart and mind and will to be centred in God, freedom to fix our gaze on things eternal and thus come home in the end and possess all things in him, our Abiding City.



A SHORT CONFERENCE ON THE OCCASION OF A NUN'S FIRST PROFESSION

ADRIAN DOWLING, O.P.

Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come; my dove in the clefts of the rock.

CANT. 2, 13.

GOD gives us a very beautiful image here, the image of the dove invited to fly to him, its white wings straining, soaring upwards. We are to fly to Christ. 'Draw me'—make me fly to thee. But the dove shelters in the clefts of the rock. We are clogged down, seeking refuge in the good things of God. Things outside us: outward possessions and attachments, ties holding us earthbound; things inside us, other loves than God, our own selves, our own will.

Today you engage yourself to Christ. This service is for a bride of Christ. It is your aim ultimately to be wed to Christ, to know no other love. But today is, as it were, the day of your engagement. We come to witness that and to pray that you may be faithful. The vows you are about to make are not negative things. They are not inspired by a hatred of God's gifts, but by a desire to go beyond them to the giver. That is not an easy road to take. On the contrary, it is an impossible road without God's mercy, and you have just admitted that. You have told us you seek God's mercy. That must be your aim all the days of your life. If we would presume to leave the clefts of the rock it is to God we must fly, we must find shelter under the wings of his mercy. (Ps. 90, 4.) Christ your Spouse is the Suffering Servant: you must think of that each day you put on your black veil.

In your obedience remember that he first obeyed, for love of you. 'Christ was made for us obedient unto death, even to the death of the Cross.' (Phil. 2, 8.) He knows your weakness, he knows all the difficulties that lie ahead, he who was 'tempted in all things like as we are, without sin'.

So it is with a holy daring and joyful trust that you can accept and face the obligations and austerities of the life to which you are about to bind yourself. You are not dismayed by the very real and solemn promises you are making, even though you are weak and they involve burdens and troubles, because you have first turned to the source of all strength, to him who is 'longsuffering and rich in mercy'.

Our Blessed Lady and our Father St Dominic and all the Saints rejoice with us today that you should have heeded God's call. They stand around us, living witnesses to the reality and the fruits of the trust you show. Like you, they heard and obeyed the voice of God. We know that they join us in our prayer that you may ever more devotedly and generously live as you have promised.



THE PRIEST AND THE MENTALLY SICK

ALBERT PLÉ, O.P.¹

TO the eyes of faith all sickness is a trial. God is there, offering us a special grace of purification and of sharing in his redeeming death, but a grace hidden and hard to discern and live. Yet the trial is still more formidable for the man whose sickness is mental, especially when, as is the case with neuroses, the sickness only partly destroys his balance and control. His agony at feeling himself partly 'alienated', a stranger, that is, to himself, is intense. Something deep inside him is escaping his inner attention and worse still his power. And on top of that those about him most often, even when they are full of good intentions, understand nothing at all, heap one ineptitude on another and

¹ Translated by Marion Parker.