

Sister Minona Anne, upon returning from your retreat this week you shared that it was hard to believe that this moment had finally arrived - this moment in time, that has led you to perpetually profess your union with Christ and with the monastic group of women here at Sacred Heart Monastery. Your journey, comprised of multiple paths paved with perseverance and endurance, first began in India. It has led you to this moment in history which did not happen on its own. The Spirit of God directed you down each path, around each corner, and over each obstacle.

Who would have imagined that God would have to work overtime, right up to the moment of this celebration, by weaving us through the twists and turns of a pandemic? But, nonetheless, you persevered in your journey and clung to the heart of Christ as your navigator. But, you did not journey alone. God placed people in your life to assist you along the way.

We recognize that it is difficult not to have some of those loved ones here with you today, your daughter Melinda and her husband Robert and their children, your beautiful granddaughters Sarah Elizabeth and Isla (eye-la) Rose. Your sisters Iza (eye-za), Grina (Greena), and Maggie and Maggie's husband Joe, your brother Mickey and his wife, Sulena, as well as your nieces, nephews and extended family and friends. We are grateful that they can be with us via technology, viewing this momentous occasion in your life from various parts of the United States and beyond. We welcome the day when we can invite your family and friends to join us in person for an extended celebration of your new life in Christ as a perpetually professed member of this Community.

Although Abbot Marcus is greatly disappointed not to be here today due to his quarantined status, we know that he and the monks of St. Bernard Abbey are praying for you, Sister Minona Anne, and for our Community on this special day.

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Sister Minona Anne, your profession today gives witness to how we, as monastics, strive to live a way of life that is counter-cultural to the world's ways. Your profession during these uncertain and unsettling times bring hope and joy and remind us of the goodness of God in our midst.

Your prostration and being covered with the pall, a sign of your death to the world's ways, gives testimony of your belief that new life does rise out of our daily deaths to self.

Instead of being afraid of change, *you and we* embrace the promise of fidelity to the monastic way of life that gives us hope as we turn toward God and welcome new growth through our daily choices. Instead of being afraid of the unknown future, *you and we* embrace the promise of stability that gives us hope and surety in the love of Christ, knowing that it is together that we will be brought to everlasting life. Instead of being focused on ourselves and what the world is doing to us, *you and we* embrace the promise of obedience that draws us out of ourselves focusing our gaze on Christ, the prioress, each other in Community, and the needs of the world around us.

These days of the pandemic have prepared us for your celebration of perpetual profession by allowing us time and opportunities to do what must be done daily, and that is to listen. To listen, as St. Benedict instructs, to the voice of God, to your prioress, to your Benedictine sisters, and to the cries of the needs around us.

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Sister Minona Anne, profession is not an action completed once and for all; rather, the realization of your actions today must be integrated into your life and become the motivating factor for your daily decisions and actions. The journey is not complete on the day of profession, but on the day of death. Thus, your life-long journey of seeking God with the sisters of this community continues.

Last night you participated in a ritual where you made a total renunciation of your goods and property in order to free yourself from distractions and allow yourself to live a life totally dependent upon God, the prioress, and the community. In just a few moments, you will freely participate in an act of total renunciation of self in order that you may have new life in Christ.

By your perpetual profession here in this oratory, you will make a commitment not only to this monastic community, but to the Church at large through your a public commitment. By this public profession, you are saying that your relationship to the ecclesial community and to society is being extended beyond your monastic community.

The oral commitment you will make to this monastic way of life, and specifically to this community at Sacred Heart Monastery, indicates the communal context of your lived commitment. When you sign your profession document and place it on the altar as a sacrificial gesture of self-giving, you freely choose to hand yourself over to Christ through this Benedictine way of life with this community.

As you sing the *Suscipe*, your prayer-response to God, you are begging God to receive your promise and uphold and sustain you in the faithful living out of that promise, acknowledging that you cannot live this promise without God's help. It is at that time when each community member joins you in your prayer, thus committing herself to support you in your commitment. As each sister joins you in singing, they are reminded of their own prayer-response to God which, according to Sister Acquinata Bockmann in one of her commentaries on the *Rule of St. Benedict*, "unites us at the deepest level of the heart and spirit."

In just a few minutes, you will become a full member of *this* Benedictine monastic community. May we continue our life-long journey together seeking God, preferring nothing to the love of Christ until we are brought together to eternal life.