

Home / Depts./Ministries / The Catholic Spirit / Archives / Issues "10

Brother of Hope Adam Neri makes final profession of vows



Brother Adam Neri, a member of the Brotherhood of Hope, makes his final profession of vows during a Mass at St. Peter the Apostle Parish, New Brunswick, July 10. — James McEvoy photos

By James McEvoy

Staff Writer

NEW BRUNSWICK — When Brother Adam Neri, a member of the Brotherhood of Hope, followed his fellow brothers in the procession of his profession Mass July 10, he experienced a powerful revelation.

"I wasn't just dedicating myself to God. I was dedicating myself to these men," Brother Adam said. "I started to weep. I was overcome by the whole thing. It was without a doubt the most incredible experience of my life. I'm still experiencing many of the graces of profession."

The Mass, celebrated by Father Philip Merdinger, founder of the Brotherhood of Hope, also marked a farewell for Brother Adam, who recently began a new ministry as a chaplain at Florida State University.

Brother Adam served the Catholic student population as a chaplain at the Catholic Center at Rutgers, an apostolate of the Diocese of Metuchen, since 2005.

Bishop Paul G. Bootkoski and members of the Brotherhood of Hope together with Brother Adam's family and friends attended the Mass celebrated at St. Peter the Apostle Parish.

In his homily, Father Merdinger compared Brother Adam to the prophet Jeremiah and said the call to vocation is an ongoing process rather than an epiphany.

"Jeremiah was about Adam's age when he was called to be a prophet. So when Jeremiah says, 'I am too young,' one can understand that," Father Merdinger said. "But the Lord says, 'I am the one who lies behind you.'

"Adam was not too young to be called. His call was present in him from the start, though like Jeremiah he didn't know it. It only came to him slowly.

"This vocation, which God has given to him, is something that the Lord has always seen for him. What we are celebrating here, amongst many things, is the fact that he said yes to what God has called him to do."

While the Mass represented a cause for celebration, Father Merdinger said Brother Adam's work and conversion are just beginning.

"It's important to understand that this is not a once in a lifetime choice, you don't do this just once and then its all over, but rather it is a series of repeated conversions to the Lord and to his ways," he said.

Prior to the closing prayer, Bishop Bootkoski congratulated Brother Adam and thanked him for his ministry and service at the Catholic Center.

"For us as a diocese, this is a wonderful experience and a wonderful occasion for Brother Adam, who has worked with us for the last few years and did a wonderful job. For that we are most appreciative, Adam," he said.

Bishop Bootkoski said Brother Adam and others who answer God's call to vocation are excellent examples to youth.

"To all of you, who are young, look at Adam, look at our sisters, members of other religious communities, diocesan priests who are all before you. If that's your call, respond," he said, adding that the Diocese of Metuchen is blessed with religious vocations and cited Brother Adam as an example.

The Mass marked the culmination of seven years of discernment and preparation initiated by Brother Adam's desire to spend a year of service in Costa Rica following his graduate studies.

"About halfway through the year, I began to have this growing unrest in my soul. As part of my time down there, I could spend long hours in prayer, I would read Scripture. I would just sit and be alone with the Lord," he said. "It just began with me being honest with myself."

When he realized God was calling him to a religious vocation, he decided to join the Brotherhood of Hope, which he became familiar with when he was a student at Rutgers.

"I was so impressed with their example of character, how they related with the students," he said.

Though he will miss his ministry at Rutgers, he is looking forward to what the Lord has in store for him at Florida State.

"Rutgers was my first mission assignment. There was a lot of excitement, everything was new for me, but there was also a lot of hard work," he said. "I developed some good pastoring relationships there. It was a real joy and privilege to see the students grow.

"I went to Florida State with a sense of joy. Things are different here. I look to learn a lot while I'm down here as well and use the gifts of God to cultivate the students to help them get to know the Lord better," he added.

Brother Adam was born in Teaneck and grew up in Berkeley Heights. He graduated from Rutgers in 2000 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English literature and earned a master's degree in education in 2001.

Following his collegiate career, he travelled to parts of Africa, Mexico and Central America doing missionary work and later taught English and Spanish at the high school level.



Members of the Brotherhood of Hope worship during Brother Adam Neri's Mass of profession.

Diocese_Metuchen

1, 1 1, 1

Tel. 1

Web: <http://www.diometuchen.org>, Email: bmunro@lyris.com