



Homily – Perpetual Profession 31 January 2026

[Jeremías 1, 4-10 | 2 Colosenses 3,12-17 | Juan 15, 1-17]

Dear Mukta, Chihiro, Jacqueline, Carmen, Hilda, Elizabeth, and Jeniffer,

Of all the many words you will hear today—and even amid the swirl of emotions you may be feeling right now—hold on to what matters most: the words that come from Jesus, who knows you from within and says to you: “As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you.”

Knowing yourselves loved comes first. It is fundamental. It is the only thing that gives meaning to the “madness” we are celebrating today: that seven beautiful women—full of life, intelligent and brave—decide that their way of responding to that love is to consecrate themselves perpetually in poverty, chastity, and obedience... and, on top of that, to devote themselves to educating the young (no easy task, as you know well) in this Society of the Sacred Heart of Jesus which, as you already know after so many years, is probably not as perfect as it seemed when you entered the novitiate...

Who would understand this, except someone in love? Exactly. That is the point. This is, first and foremost, a matter of love. It makes complete sense because it is love lived, experienced, sustained, and carried forward. Not necessarily a perfect love, but a real and faithful one. Learning to believe that fully is the most important task for the rest of our lives.

This harvest time of Tertianship here in Rome—well accompanied by Jera and Quena, deeply upheld by the prayer and affection of the whole community—has allowed you to know the breadth, the height, and the measure of that love: a love that is merciful, that heals, that lifts up, that draws you to itself and at the same time sends you out to others.

How do we remain in that love? Religious life cannot be a long endurance test. Perpetual vows can be frightening because they are definitive—but also because we tend to look at them from ourselves, not from Jesus’ love. The most definitive reality is him. And it is he himself who gives solidity to our response.

After today’s Eucharist you will probably have the same temperament, face similar challenges—interior and exterior—have to deal with other sisters, with moments of consolation and desolation, with passionate work and with other tasks that are more boring or routine... Yet everything finds its meaning when what moves us is not so much the consolations of God as, above all, the God of consolations. This is the moment to place each heart rightly alongside the Sacred Heart, and thus—from heart to heart—to celebrate that what matters most is not so much what we do, but our bonds of belonging.

To remain—a word almost taboo in our time—is something beautiful because it implies process and maturation. “Remain in my love,” the Lord tells you. Remaining is what has brought us here to celebrate God’s faithfulness throughout all these years, and yours. But it is more than simply lasting or staying. In a throwaway world, the word *permanent* is sharply countercultural. It means freely choosing to stay united to him and to your sisters of the Sacred Heart.

Remaining is the verb that makes love more than a pleasant experience or a passing moment of comfort. To remain in Jesus’ love means building on rock and, at the same time, casting the nets—trusting. It is entering a living bond that is not flat or uniform, that bears the mark of your wounds, your stories, your dreams, and your cultures. It has nothing to do with what is static; it points to a vital relationship. If “remaining” in religious life meant securing ourselves, getting stuck, settling in, then we would have betrayed the love of Jesus.

Today you are betting on what is true, and you do so from the certainty of the heart, not from evidence or pragmatic calculation. For it is easier to give reasons for the “wisdom” of avoiding commitments that are too stable... Who can guarantee you will be happy in this life? What if the mission doesn’t go well, if I don’t like the community, or if the fire that fills me today dies down? We cannot guarantee the future.

But we already know that nothing else gives us that faithfulness. What saves us is not something—this or that state of life, work, mission, country we live in... What grounds us is Someone: the Lord Jesus, his whole person, symbolized in his Sacred Heart. It is a person. Not a project. His emotions, his feelings, his choices, his words and his silences... alongside those of each of you.

It does not matter if words fail us, if we are still unfinished, if we are imperfect... As he says to the prophet Jeremiah: “Do not say, ‘I am only a youth’; for to all to whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you.”

What truly matters is that what we celebrate today is true: he loves you as the Father has loved him. I invite you to cling to that truth—to delight in it, sing it, live it, express it, and hold it in the very depths of your hearts... there, where the Heart of Jesus himself has chosen to make his nest and to remain forever, in a unique way in each of you—and, through you, in the service of the whole world. Amen.

Cristóbal Fones, SJ