



OUR LADY OF CLEAR CREEK MONASTERY

Lent, 2001

Dear Friends of Our Lady of the Annunciation,

"Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it ; unless the Lord guard the city, he watcheth in vain that guardeth it."

How often have we experienced the truth of these verses of Psalm 126 since the official inauguration ceremonies which took place on the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes last year! Many a storm has blown through our neck of the Oklahoman hills, threatening to carry away our barn-chapel and our little wooden houses, but by the grace of God and the gracious protection of Our Lady, we are still here, albeit with a few holes in the roof as a result of the most recent of these 'tempests', which though short-lived proved to be of particular violence.

Not only are our makeshift habitations of the first hour still standing, but we are vigorously pursuing the construction of even *more* temporary living quarters : we have no choice really. As I write this letter several postulants are learning patience in the guest-house as they await the moment when there will be room enough for them to join the novices in the new Novitiate building which will soon be ready. Several others as well are hoping to join them there a little later on this year. The new building, in addition to housing the Novitiate, will also include a much needed Chapter-Room, where many monastic meetings and ceremonies take place and a Conference room.

Of course, the small-scale building projects we are pursuing, hopefully with much ingenuity (necessity being the mother monastic invention), do not make us forgetful of the need we are experiencing more and more each day for buildings better adapted to our way of life. On February 21st I signed a contract with an architect, Dr. Thomas Gordon Smith of Notre Dame University, who recently completed a beautiful Seminary building for the Fraternity of Saint Peter in Denton Nebraska, as many of you are well aware. Mr. Smith has expressed great enthusiasm about working on our own project, the *first phase* of which will include, God willing, a church and another, fairly spacious building, where both monks' and guests' quarters could be located, as well as a small refectory, a kitchen and a basement big enough to squeeze in various indispensable work areas such as the laundry-room, the linen-room, the tailor's shop, the shoe shop, etc

However, as I already pointed out last year, more important yet than the construction of material buildings destined to provide the monastic community with a suitable setting for the contemplative life, is that of the *spiritual edifice* formed of living stones. In this respect as well there has been quite a development since my last letter was mailed to you. The monastic habit was given to two more Postulants during Father Abbot's stay here last October and then to a third in early December, bringing the number of those inside the Novitiate up to six. Two of these Postulants also received the Mandatum ceremony during Father Abbot's stay, thereby beginning their canonical Novitiate year which precedes the taking of simple vows. Father Abbot has already accepted four new candidates for this year, not to mention several others who are at present in the process of trying to discern God's will with regard to a possible vocation at Clear Creek. So, as you can see, there is quite a bit of activity going on in the monastic 'bee-hive', to use another metaphor.

We know as well—and this becomes more and more clear as weeks and months go on—that this spiritual edifice extends beyond our visible horizon. Not only do the Holy Angels keep watch day and night over this little corner of God's Creation; not only do the Saints, with Our Lady at their head, encourage our every action, our every attempt to further in some small way the Kingdom of Heaven, but the bonds of true Christian friendship have enveloped us from every side. Despite the relative seclusion of our location, here in rural Oklahoma (which keeps many of you from visiting us frequently, especially in winter) the support you have given us since we have arrived here has been overwhelming. I could not even begin to list all of the gifts of every size, shape and color which have been laid on our doorstep (we even have some chickens now, having all, or at least *most* of their tail feathers ...). It would be impossible to enumerate all the services rendered to us with a generous heart, not just once, but over and over again. You have truly become part of our monastic family, which is becoming a large family, indeed.

And so have we all entered into the third millennium of grace. As the proverb has it, *It's the first step that counts*. According to his custom, Father Abbot Forgeot gave us at Christmas a motto for this first year of the new millennium, which could be of help to those outside the monastery walls as well. It is, in fact, the inscription entrusted by Our Lord to Saint Faustina for the icon of Divine Mercy : 'Jesu confido tibi,' 'Jesus I trust in Thee.' Whereas those giants of sanctity of the first centuries—I am thinking of the monks of Egypt and of Saint Benedict, along with the Fathers of the Church—laid the foundations of Christian spirituality, it seems that in more recent times, the Holy Ghost has been at work, *fine-tuning* our souls through the lives and writings of such Saints as the Little Flower of Lisieux and Sister Faustina. In a world characterized more and more each day by the confusion of a civilization having lost its spiritual bearings, the message of supernatural confidence transmitted to us by Saint Faustina, not unlike the 'Little Way' of Saint Therese, can be a powerful means, not only of putting us back in touch with our Catholic roots, but of giving us new insight into the fathomless depths of God's love for us. The monks of Clear Creek, for their own small part, also wish to contribute something to this necessary work of re-evangelizing the Christian world from the inside out, to participate in what the Holy Father has so aptly named the 'New Evangelization'.

"Unless the Lord build the house..." There is no doubt about it, the months that lie directly ahead of us present a real challenge for the foundation we started here a year and a half ago under the patronage of Our Lady of the Annunciation. Whether or not we will be able to meet the challenge—that of wisely assimilating the vocations Divine Providence sends us, that of finding the financial resources necessary to continue our construction project, that of living up to our monastic vows—remains to be seen. In any case, I know we can count on your continued support, both material and spiritual, and I promise that the monks of Clear Creek will do their best to bring down upon you and all those dear to you an abundance of God's blessings.

Yours faithfully in Our Lord and Our Lady,

br. Philip Anderson, O.S.B.

P.S. The local post-office has notified us that from now on they will only deliver mail sent to our current mailing address, which is to say :

5804 W. Monastery Road Hulbert, Oklahoma 74441