



## OUR LADY OF CLEAR CREEK MONASTERY

Lent, 2002

Dear Friends of Our Lady of the Annunciation,

*“Quasi modo geniti infantes....” “As new-born babes, desire the rational milk without guile.” (I Petri 2)*

As I mentioned last year, in our monasteries it is customary that on Christmas Eve Father Abbot give a motto taken from Holy Scripture or from the Sacred Liturgy, outlining a spiritual program for the monks to follow in the year to come. This Christmas Father Antoine gave to all the monks of Fontgombault and her daughter-houses (including Our Lady of Clear Creek) this passage from the first Letter of Saint Peter, which forms the Introit of Low Sunday, Octave day of Easter: *“Quasi modo geniti infantes....” “As new-born babes, desire the rational milk without guile.”* The reason for the choice of this text is closely linked to the present situation of our foundation here in Oklahoma.

Of course, the doctrine of spiritual childhood, as proposed by spiritual masters such as Saint Therese of Lisieux, is something always enlightening, for monks as well as for all Christians who desire to lead a more perfect life; in fact, its practice remains the universal prerequisite for entering into the joys of eternity: *“Amen, I say to you, unless you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” (Mt.18:3)* But there is a particular reason for this year’s motto. When Father Abbot and I met with Mother Angelica last November in the parlor of her monastery near Birmingham, Alabama, we expressed to her our hopes of building a beautiful new monastery in Oklahoma. She promised to send us a statue of the Child Jesus, saying that we could rely on Him to help us succeed in our vast undertaking, just as she had confided to Him, with success, her own extensive construction projects.

It was at the beginning of Midnight Mass that the statue of the Child Jesus was placed in the monastic Oratory. During the Homily I announced what Father Abbot had decided would be our common plan of prayer to obtain the grace we are hoping for. Beginning on Christmas Day, the monks of Our Lady of Clear Creek, together with those of our friends who choose to join us, would recite each day, in addition to the usual rosary, a special chaplet of the Child Jesus, comprised of three Our Fathers and twelve Hail Marys, the latter being each preceded by the invocation, *“And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.”* The chaplet is concluded by the following prayer: *“Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, into your hands, living and dying, I commend my spirit”* and one *“Glory be.”* This practice will be continued until the first stone of our permanent monastery is blessed, although Father Abbot hopes that many will continue the devotion even after that important threshold has been crossed.

In the meantime we have not been slumbering with respect to the preliminary stages already under way. Our architect, Mr. Thomas Gordon Smith, and his team have brought the plans to the end of what is referred to as the *“design development”* phase and will no doubt have completed the construction documents themselves within the next few months. A team of engineers is also hard at work, solving many of the practical challenges which our monastic buildings pose. This summer a new road will take shape, as well as a solid bridge over Little Clear Creek, permitting access to the building site. According to the current timetable, which seems fairly *“realistic”* at this point, the digging of the foundations for Phase One (the church, the

gatehouse, and one building of living quarters) would begin in the spring of 2003. The little card accompanying this letter should give you a fairly good idea of what the first buildings of our new monastery will actually look like.

In a different domain, that of the "spiritual construction," we have also been busy, receiving quite a few new vocations. Since my letter of Lent, 2001, six men have entered our Novitiate, with another due to enter before the present letter reaches you. As is common in any Novitiate, not all those who enter persevere, but we have a very good group of Novices at present, and that is most encouraging for the monastic community, needless to say. One of the two Novitiate groups, the "Choir Novices," are at present housed in the new Novitiate building, which has been completed, and which provides us with a sufficient number of cells to "make do" for some time. During his stay last November, Father Abbot gave the monastic habit to three new Postulants and admitted two of the clothed Postulants into their canonical Novitiate year. He also received the vows of our first two simple professed, a landmark to be sure in the history of Our Lady of the Annunciation of Clear Creek.

Novices are not the only things that are multiplying. Our sheep herd has grown considerably, bringing the number of ewes up to about one hundred (we hope to get up to two hundred eventually). The only practical problem has been that the Great Pyrenees sheep dogs have a tendency to wander, and so we are looking for a species of sheep that will keep an eye on the dogs!

Our wood-shop has finally been set up. One Choir monk and several Brothers are already busy making useful items for the monastic community before eventually trying their hand at furniture to be marketed.

After hesitating for quite some time on this somewhat delicate matter, we have finally decided to establish an official website "of the Friends of Clear Creek Monastery." Although we shall continue our policy of not having access to the Internet from the monastery itself, it seemed appropriate, here in America, to have a few pages of information on the Web, as a service to those who might be interested in making a retreat or pursuing a monastic vocation. The address of this Internet site will be : [www.clearcreekmonks.org](http://www.clearcreekmonks.org)

Finally, we hope our new retreat-house for women, the "Hermitage" as we are calling it, will be ready to receive guests by about Easter time. This new addition to our guest facilities, located in a wooded area not far from the Monastery's front gate, will be reserved for ladies wishing to make a retreat in a more recollected and prayerful atmosphere. For further information, please contact our Father Guestmaster by letter or fax (918 772 1044).

So, as you can see, thanks to you and your prayers we are doing well. May God bless you for your great kindness towards us.

"Quasi modo geniti infantes..." As the ashes still smoke at what was once the World Trade Center, the words of the Holy Liturgy of Ash Wednesday take on a special significance this year: "Remember, man, that thou art dust, and unto dust thou shalt return." History teaches us that the power of great nations on this earth is never eternal. The hour may be later than we think, the urgency greater, to become again "as little children."

Yours faithfully in Our Lord and Our Lady,

br. Philip Anderson, o.s.b.

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