



✠ TO THE FRIENDS OF CLEAR CREEK

*Our Lady of the Annunciation of Clear Creek Monastery*

*5804 W. Monastery Road, Hulbert, Oklahoma 74441*

Lent, 2004

*Trahe nos, post te curremus.* “Draw us, O Virgin Immaculate; we will run after thee...” (from the Liturgy of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception)

Dear Friends of Clear Creek,

It would take more than one small newsletter to relate all the events, that have marked the growth of our foundation in Oklahoma this past year. I will do my best, however, to satisfy the interest you so kindly express, and to help you truly become, in this way, part of the monastic family as its history unfolds.

As was the case already the previous year, much of our attention and activity was focused again on various aspects of our building project. How could it be otherwise in these first years of our existence? What more important thing does a baby have to do than grow?

First of all, the construction of our bridge, begun in the summer of 2002 and actively pursued throughout the past year by Mr. Daniel Wilson and his associate Mr. Ross Gray, was completed in early November to the great satisfaction of all. This strong and beautiful structure, built with sandstone from our property, speaks for itself (see the page of photos accompanying this letter). A way is now open for even the largest trucks to reach the construction site of our future monastery.

It has been a decisive year as well for the “great” project, that is to say, the construction of a large monastic church and a residential building, which will house both the monks and some guests. It all began on March 19 with a liturgical procession to the construction site in honor of Saint Joseph. On July 2 Father Prior of Clear Creek signed a contract with *Manhattan Construction* (out of Tulsa) to build these structures. Ground was broken on the 28<sup>th</sup> of the same month.

Another procession, this time in honor of Our Lady, was made on August 6 (the first day of a Novena leading up to the feast of the Assumption), during which the monks chanted the litanies of the Blessed Virgin as they walked inside the excavated area where the crypt of the church would be built. The next day the first elements of the foundations were poured. Miraculous medals and medals of St. Benedict were placed in the wet cement.

From then on work went without interruption until that most memorable and significant event which was the blessing and placing of the first stone of our church by Bishop Slattery of Tulsa, on November 21, feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It was a grace-filled day, indeed, beginning with the simple profession of one of our young monks, during High Mass. The blessing of the first stone took place in the afternoon, on the construction site itself. Never had there been a more beautiful November day in the memory of Oklahomans. A large crowd of faithful friends came to celebrate with us this important moment. Many workers were in attendance, proud of the construction work already accomplished. A troop of Boy Scouts was on hand to direct traffic and parking. An Abbot and several monks from monasteries of the region joined us for the ceremony. After this very beautiful rite—during which not only the first stone, but the whole site received a blessing, and a solemn charter was read before being sealed

inside the stone—refreshments were served under a large tent. The monks then sang the office of Vespers in the crypt under construction to conclude the day. It is certainly no simple coincidence that this marvelous event occurred exactly one year after I consecrated the Monastery of Clear Creek to the Immaculate Heart of Our Lady.

Since November 21, much progress has been made on the first stage of our constructions, i.e. on the basement level of Phase One. This particular stage of development should be complete by the end of February. We must then halt construction until we have enough funds to start the next stage, which will entail building the walls all the way up and putting a roof over them. I hope to be able to give our construction company the “green light” to proceed some time after Easter of this year.

This next stage represents, however, the greatest financial challenge we have ever had to face (or will ever have to face, no doubt, in the future), and so I especially ask your help and prayers that we might be able to meet the challenge. The warm reception given in the Washington, D.C., area for Father Prior and myself in early November was yet another proof of the profound friendship which continues to envelop the community of Clear Creek.

Otherwise, life at Clear Creek continues to develop. The flocks are prospering, the orchard has given a bit of fruit already and should produce quite a bit this coming Fall. A study is under way to make use of our forest areas (the underbrush) as pasture for our sheep. Several monks are becoming quite proficient in various skills related to furniture building, under the guidance of a highly qualified teacher from Tulsa. Of greater importance is the fact that young men are continuing to knock at our door, and not a few are entering.

Some visitors were a bit shocked last spring and summer to see the monks wearing white habits instead of the customary black. This was an experiment in the use of lighter tunics for the hotter season, a custom which is traditional in warmer climates.

All in all we are most thankful to God for the countless good things His gentle Providence has lavished upon us, especially by means of our many friends in America. We are nevertheless keenly aware that peace is a gift from higher up.

The motto I have chosen this year for our monks of Fontgombault and of Clear Creek intends to recognize this fact as well as to honor the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception next December. *Trahe nos, post te curremus*. These words, taken from the *Song of Songs*, are applied by the liturgy—in a spiritual sense—to our relationship to the Blessed Virgin Mary in her Immaculate Conception: “Draw us, we will run after thee.” What a wonderful program of life! In a time of cultural upheaval and profound spiritual disorientation, what better remedy can we hope to find than this spotless Eve, image of the Church, clothed with the sun, having a crown of twelve stars on her head and treading upon, not only the moon (the inconstancy of temporal things), but the Ancient Serpent himself whose head is crushed under her immaculate foot?

Please know that we pray for each and every one of you. The intention of High Mass every Sunday is “pro benefactoribus nostris”, “for our benefactors”. We too count very much, as I have often said, on the spiritual alms of your prayers for us. May the same Immaculate Mother of God lead you ever closer to her Son—ever higher and into that peace which the world cannot give.

+ f. Antoine Fiepost  
Abbot of Notre-Dame de Fontgombault.