

**“Amen, I say to you, unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 18:3)**

August 2006

Dear Friends of Clear Creek Monastery,

### **The Age of Innocence**

It is only natural that adults look down upon children: in terms of pounds and inches, they simply do not measure up; nor can they pretend to have even approached the moral stature we look for in a “complete” man or woman. Their childishness often embarrasses us. And yet the Gospel presents them as paradigms of the Kingdom: “Amen . . . unless you . . . become as little children . . .”

Monastic life strives to restore that innocent side of childhood to which the Gospel refers. In the struggle for the soul of modern man, amid the cultural shrapnel of an all too adult (not to say adulterous) society, where even children are not allowed the luxury of a certain healthy innocence, it may seem that this ideal is doomed. In any case, it seems safe to say that to aspire to spiritual childhood in our time is to swim against the current, even if one lives along a sparkling creek in rural Oklahoma.

As we approach the seventh anniversary of the founding of our monastery of Our Lady of Clear Creek, I must say that adapting our style of monastic life to the American setting has been daunting at times. There have been moments when it seemed that our monastery must pattern itself on the American business model or cease to be. But when I behold the beaming joy of our Brother gardener, who has come to announce that the radishes we ate at lunch were the fruit of his labors or hear that another monk has brought back a wounded fawn in his arms, I realize that we have not yet entirely lost our innocence.

### **The Surprising End of a Novena**

I do believe nevertheless that our foundation has attained a certain fullness of age, a tiny beginning of what St. Paul calls “the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13). Much of what God has realized here at Clear Creek “came home” to us recently, at the end of the Novena to St. Benedict, which many of you were kind enough to pray with us during the days leading up to his feast on July 11.

One of the more concrete intentions of this Novena was our urgent need for rain. Many ranchers in our area, like us, had to sell off their herds of cattle for lack of rainfall, and for the lack of prospect of having any hay to feed the livestock through next winter. One of our wells had gone dry; all the grass had turned brown; the trees were suffering. We had decided that the Novena would end after Vespers on the Feast of St. Benedict, with a procession from our little Oratory up to the site of the new monastery.

Before Vespers started, the sky had turned cloudy, but that had happened before in the preceding days, without any rain falling. Towards the end of Vespers, however, thunder began to shake the building, and

Foundation for the Annunciation Monastery of Clear Creek

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just about the time we were to begin the procession, such an outpouring of rain issued forth from the heavens that all possibility of processing outside was excluded. The five inches of rain that fell was truly "heaven-sent." Fortunately, one monk did make the procession. The rather large statue of St. Benedict which was up until then located just outside the present Oratory had been transported to a new location — in the transept of the new church — earlier in the day. Monks and the faithful now make little pilgrimages up to the site to pray to St. Benedict in that place with no walls or roof, but with great promise.

Along with the rain came many spiritual benedictions. Two more Postulants are now preparing to join us before the end of the year. The community is growing in other ways as well. One Novice "graduated" and is now with the elder monks. Another, after having completed his theological studies in France, is back with us to stay. These younger monks can begin to take on some of the work load that the founders have had to carry by themselves these past years, while the young were in formation.

Then there is the great business of the construction project. After having suffered a serious setback in May — when we learned that the soaring construction costs had increased the price of the project by 50% since last October — I am happy to report that all seems well again. By the grace of God, we are preparing to sign a contract with Manhattan Construction and start building again in early September. St. Benedict is surely helping in this too.

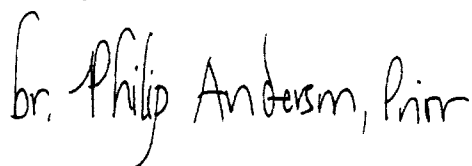
### **A Leap of Faith**

The monastic adventure we have been living in Oklahoma for some seven years now has always implied a great deal of trust in Divine Providence. I suppose it is similar to what sailing was in other times, when the knowledge of meteorological conditions and navigation was more primitive. One can reasonably set out on the voyage if most of the required conditions are met, but there is no absolute guarantee of success. Storm clouds may unexpectedly darken the horizon; difficulties on board may render the situation even more critical. When all the stars have disappeared, there may be no light except an unflinching hope, alive in certain human hearts.

You have seen us through many storms already, although you may not have always been aware of them. We recognize the loving hand of Divine Providence and the maternal touch of Our Lady at work in the help we receive from so many friends. We are realists, though, and know that our existence continues to be a challenge. Without your continued assistance — both spiritual and material — we cannot fulfill our vocation, we cannot complete the vision. We are still on the high seas in many ways; we continue to make a leap of faith.

This being said, you cannot imagine the joy that will be ours when the construction crews reappear! I promise we will send photos when the day comes. We will also try to inform you in some detail of how all the fundraising efforts have gone. Many tell me that we need to communicate more effectively in this area. The lesson is well taken.

Let me thank you once again for your continuing prayers and support. May God bless each and every one of you and may Our Lady smile upon you and all your intentions.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Br. Philip Anderson, Prior". The ink is dark and the handwriting is fluid and personal.

Bro. Philip Anderson, Prior of Our Lady of Clear Creek