



Monastic Hospitality

“Let all guests that come be received like Christ Himself, for He will say: ‘I was a stranger and ye took me in.’ And let fitting honor be shown to all, especially, however, to such as are of the household of the faith and to pilgrims.” (Rule, chap. 53)

June 2007

Dear Friends of Clear Creek Monastery,

The history of Christian hospitality is a rich one and a worthy illustration of the spirit of Faith and Charity that has guided the Church through two millennia and more. Angels have come to earth disguised as strangers looking for a warm welcome. Pope St. Gregory the Great is said to have once received a pilgrim who disappeared into thin air as the saint was about to pour water over his hands as a sign of hospitality. That night the Lord Christ appeared to the Pope and explained: “On other days you have waited on me in my members, but today it was I myself whom you welcomed.”



Above is the architect's rendering of the Gatehouse — at the far right — and the guest quarters of the residence building in the background.

Being counted among those institutes of the Church which are “wholly oriented toward the contemplative life,” Our Lady of Clear Creek Monastery does not engage in any apostolic activities as such. Nevertheless, hospitality has played an important part in the monastic way of life since its very origins. Even the Desert Fathers — those monks who lived a solitary existence in remote regions of Egypt and Palestine beginning in the fourth century — even they would abandon their meditations and penitential works to receive guests who knocked on the door of their hermitages. This hospitality among the monks has always been considered a sacred duty.

This tradition is continued here at Clear Creek. Each year we receive several thousand guests. Simple but adequate rooms are provided for gentlemen and older boys who are received in the guest quarters immediately adjacent to the monastery and who are often invited to dine with the monastic community. Several houses for ladies or families staying together are also available within walking distance.

More than a just a material comfort, however, monastic hospitality is meant to be, above all, a work of mercy, both corporal and spiritual. Each guest is invited to participate in the celebration of Holy Mass and in the mystical Hours of the Divine Office, much of which is sung in Gregorian chant. Although we do not generally give organized retreats, several priests of the monastic community are available to hear confessions and give spiritual guidance to those seeking it. The holy silence which envelops the monastery is a sermon unto itself and an oasis for the heart.

Building a Spiritual Drawbridge

One of the most important features of monastery buildings — one that assures the proper contact between the monastic community and the outside world — is the Porter's Lodge or Gatehouse. You might think of it as a kind of drawbridge such as those found in medieval castles. This is

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where arriving guests come to knock on the door; this is where Mass intentions are given; this is where one goes to ask to see a monk. Such is the perspective of someone coming to visit the monks. From the other point of view, that of the monks, it is thanks to the tireless labor of the Porter that the silence and tranquility of the inner places of the monastery are preserved from the agitation of without. It is because of the Gatehouse that monastic hospitality can be so generous towards the pilgrims and travelers who appear on our doorstep.

A decision was recently made to undertake the building of our Gatehouse sometime this summer or fall, concomitantly with the finishing of the residence building well under way. We are very grateful for your prayers and your donations, which have made this important step possible. The monastery itself is meant to be a kind of gateway between Heaven and Earth. The monastic Gatehouse is thus the strategic guard-tower, where monks and (invisibly) Angels regulate the flow of traffic to and from the City of God. It is thus a faint image of Our Lady herself, who is called *Coeli Porta*, “Heaven’s Gateway”.

Our Lady of the Annunciation, *Coeli Porta*, keep you and assist you always, and may St. Benedict intercede for all the friends of the monastic community.

br. Philip Anderson, Prior

br. Philip Anderson, Prior of Clear Creek

A Note from Father Cellarer

On Friday, June 8, there took place here at Clear Creek the “Topping Off” party on the worksite. This is the moment when workers and all involved celebrate the posing of the final piece of the roof frame, a turning point (literally a “watershed”) in the construction process. There was much joy among the workers and the friends of the monastery who came out in large numbers. The local Fire Department also showed up, to our great delight.

As Father Prior mentioned above, we have been given the “green light” to proceed with the construction of the Gatehouse. This is a most welcome addition to the current construction operations, as it will be most useful in connection with life at the new monastery. So, as the gatehouse includes a small portico, we will have to cut some more beams!

The brickwork on the residence is coming along very quickly now. The roof should soon be completely covered, allowing work inside the residence to get into “full swing”.

A project particularly dear to our hearts is that of the construction of stone altars for the crypt, which we hope to begin this summer with the help of a local artisan working at the monastery. More about that later!

