



The Uses of Adversity: Evangelical Poverty and Other Christmas Blessings

Christmases come and go. The world plods on, like the donkey that carried Our Lady toward the stable of Bethlehem. We find ourselves each year a little bit the same and a little bit changed. Some great and consoling secret lies ahead, but the sadness of human affairs presses around us like the north wind on a December night in Judea.

This year many families will feel the pinch of an economic recession that has been a long time coming and which is likely to be felt for some time to come. Whatever may be the complex reasons for this decline, the ultimate explanation is surely to be sought with that old companion of humanity, human sinfulness. As always, it is the poor, who will suffer the most.

The political landscape looks just as bleak, at least for those who hold the *Gospel of Life* to be an essential dimension of the Gospel itself. How long will the modern Massacre of the Innocents continue? How long will it be before, in the United States of America, it becomes a crime to state the obvious, i.e. that marriage is a sacred bond between a man and a woman?

Even we can understand some things, says the Donkey of the Manger. "In the beginning God created man to His own image, male and female He created them." Yes, even we beasts remember that; no way around the facts of life, you know.

On the other hand, for those who travel with Christ spiritual resources are never lacking. Although no one wants to see his fellow human beings reduced to a state of misery; nevertheless, a certain kind of poverty — what the English poet, Chaucer, calls “glad poverty” — is one of the great secrets of happiness. Will this really be so tragic if at Christmas this year people have to renounce buying another cell phone or the latest computer game? On the contrary, there will surely be more true mirth and a Christian sense of thanksgiving precisely in those families that are having a hard time making ends meet.

Foundation for the Annunciation Monastery of Clear Creek

5804 West Monastery Road • Hulbert, OK 74441 • Phone: (918) 772-2454 • Fax: (918) 772-1044 • www.clearcreekmonks.org

Even the new political agenda, which promises to be unfriendly to authentic family values, should not take away our joy. Our Roman Catholic faith is a *faith for all seasons*. In the long run, not only do religious prejudice and even persecution fail to crush this faith, but on the contrary, these chilling winds bring out the very best in Christians.

As another, even more famous, poet wrote:

Sweet are the uses of adversity;
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head . . .

Like many of you, we monks are feeling the effect of “cold winds” at the approach of the Christmas Season. While we continue to enjoy the consolation of many solid vocations to the monastic life, our plans for the material development of the monastery are shrouded in some uncertainty. At the least, we must put them “on hold”. But we will let none of this dampen our spirits. Our monastic family rests entirely in the hands of Divine Providence, and all will come in due time, as God wills it.

On behalf of all the monks, I wish you a very Blessed and Merry Christmas, assuring you of our gratitude and continued prayers. What will the brave New Year 2009 bring? Numerous joys, no doubt, and our share of sorrows. But the glad poverty of Christmas will set the tone, as we move forward to

meet the challenge of each new day. Sweet are the uses of adversity for those who love God.

If that jackal Herod goes through with his plan to kill the little ones, says the Donkey, we might have to go all the way to Egypt . . . a very tiring business. But I will plod my way along with steady steps. I carry on my back the Hope of the World.



br. Philip Anderson, Prior

P.S. Perhaps our architect’s conceptual rendering of the interior of the church (above) will inspire you — as it does us — with a sense of hope for the future.

