

A Time to Every Purpose: Ten Years at Clear Creek

August 2009

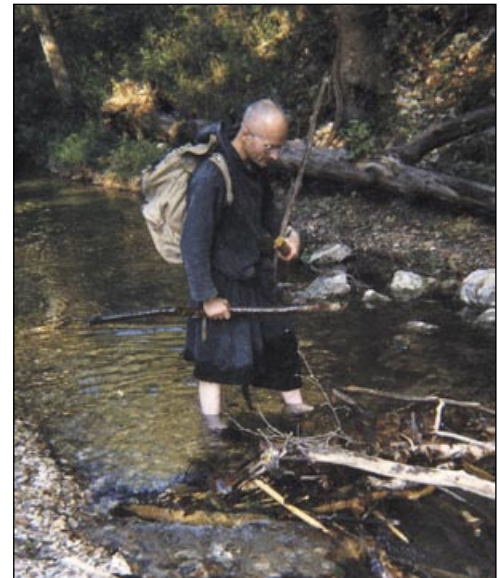
Dear Friend of Clear Creek,

As we prepare to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the founding of our Lady of Clear Creek Monastery (the first, small group arrived in Oklahoma on August 19th, 1999) — amid events that have so dramatically affected the life of our community over the past few weeks — a flood of things come to my mind and heart that I would like to share with you.

Not least among these is the sudden and devastating illness of our Father Subprior, Father François de Feydeau, the very one who led the pilot team of “pioneers” to Oklahoma ten years ago. It was on May 20th earlier this year, after the first Vespers of the Ascension that he began to show alarming symptoms. We rushed him to St. Francis Hospital in Tulsa, where he was soon diagnosed with a very aggressive form of brain cancer. He has been struggling for his life since then.

Along with all the monks, I am immensely grateful for the river of prayer that has ascended to Heaven on his behalf from all over the world. Father de Feydeau has accomplished so much here, both spiritually and materially, that it would be impossible (as well as un-monastic) to catalog all his efforts. God has asked a great sacrifice of him and of us, the extent of which is still unknown as I write this letter.

Clear Creek continues to flow nevertheless. *Vita in motu*, as the Philosophers say, “Life is a thing in movement.” Despite the economic crisis that has affected the lives of so many and “dried up” the financial resources of some of our benefactors, we recently signed a contract to continue construction on our monastery. The current project, though relatively small, is significant in that it shows that Divine Providence continues to bless us. The work involves finishing the exterior of the crypt, where we have our chapel. This solid brick wall will afford better protection from the north wind in winter and render the building more beautiful and worthy of God.



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Late in the evening of September 15th, 1999, as they stepped off the airplane at Tulsa, Oklahoma, the monks that had come to found a new monastery were wondering exactly what they would find in this place. For some of them it was the first time they had set foot in the United States of America. America did not let them down. An enthusiastic welcome-party was waiting for them to arrive. There was a true sense of friendship in this first reception. They sang “Home on the Range.” There were so many smiling faces. And yet the night was still young. . . .

Foundation for the Annunciation Monastery of Clear Creek

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For those who have never tried, navigating the backwoods of Cherokee County Oklahoma on a moonless night is not as easy as it sounds, even nowadays with GPS. That night there was some disagreement among the various volunteer drivers as to how to get to the monks' new home on the range, in the flinty foothills of the Ozarks. Folks got lost. Cars got separated.

When the caravan — or rather the various parts thereof — finally got to the ranch-turned-monastery, it was past midnight. The feast of Our Lady of Sorrows was over, and a new day was just beginning. Before dealing with a few urgent practical matters (for example that suitcase belonging to a lady living many miles from Clear Creek, which had been inadvertently picked up at the airport by someone thinking it belonged to a monk), Father Abbot led the group of monastic founders to the loft of the big log cabin, where a small chapel with the Blessed Sacrament in a tabernacle had been prepared. Here is the little Divine Office we sang on that memorable occasion:



The Monks arrive at Clear Creek — September, 1999.

Ecce ancilla Domini, fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum, Alleluia (sung Antiphon)
Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it done to me according to Thy word, Alleluia.

Psalm 112, *Laudate Pueri Dominum*, Praise the Lord, ye children.

V/ *Ave Maria, gratia plena*, Hail Mary, full of grace.

R/ *Dominus tecum*. The Lord is with Thee

Collect of the Feast of the Annunciation.

It was the first time we prayed together as a community at Clear Creek. Our hope is that the Divine praises will continue to be heard at Clear Creek until the end of the world.



Our current project: finishing the exterior of the crypt.

It would be a bit long to tell here of our first day at our new home, how we went exploring the property, admiring all the wild animals and being quite surprised by a giant emu that surged out of the brush at one point (Father Abbot laughed so much he was in tears: he said he had been expecting many strange things, but not that, *pas ça!*). Those first adventures will have to wait for another letter.

The important thing is to thank God for all that these ten years have brought to us and to thank you for being such a great part of it. What lies ahead is God's secret, but we count on you to be there with us in virtue of the spiritual friendship

that binds us. In this Year of the Priest our prayers go out in a special way to those of you who have responded to the call to follow more closely Christ the Eternal High Priest.

May Our Lady of the Annunciation, our Patron Saint and constant inspiration, help us monks and all our friends to make of our lives something beautiful for God.

br. Philip Anderson, Prior

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