



THE EMPTY CHAIR AND THE ANGELS OF CHRISTMAS

Christmas 2009

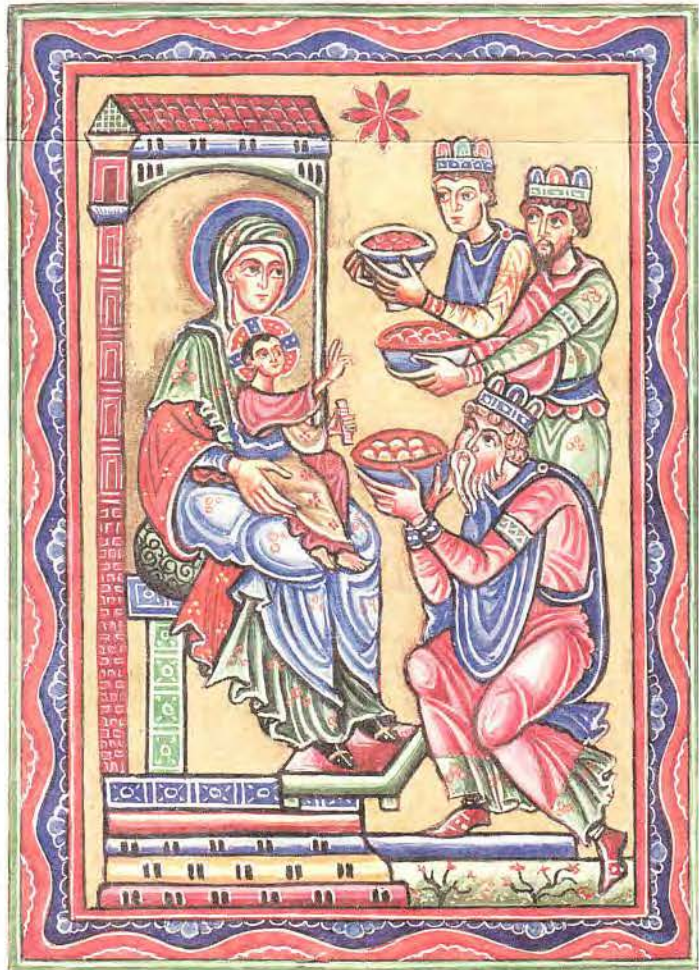
Dear Friend of Clear Creek,

Christmas is a time for remembering the great things God has done. It is a privileged moment for reflecting upon the fact that He created the world and that He set about restoring it in a poor Manger, where a Child was born unto us and a Son was given. It is furthermore a time for recalling the mercies that Divine Providence has showered upon each one of us in the comings and goings of our daily lives.

It seems that this time of year is also the season in which we most feel the weight of sadness that bears down upon the human race in so many ways. We often find ourselves caught in the web of contradictory circumstances, a little like the character in Frank Capra's classic Christmas film, *It's a Wonderful Life*. In his desperation, George Bailey actually contemplates suicide on Christmas Eve, before an Angel sets his life back on course.

Here at Clear Creek there has been the recent sadness of losing one of our founders and much beloved monks, Father François de Feydeau, who rendered his child-like soul to God during the chant of Matins on November 15th. It is our custom to leave a monk's seat vacant in the refectory, with a Crucifix on the table, for thirty days after his death. That empty chair has been daily before our eyes to remind us of our loss.

But the Angels have also been busy, forbidding us to dwell on sad things, not letting us forget the overarching scheme of human existence as foreseen by God.



Foundation for the Annunciation Monastery of Clear Creek

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

So many good things have occurred here this year! Just since the middle of October we have witnessed the priestly Ordination of one of our monks, the solemn profession of two others and the simple vows of four at once! Father Abbot also gave the habit to a new monk and another has since entered.

Our material environment has also undergone some impressive changes. As I hinted in my last letter, the end of the summer saw the opening of a new construction project: the building of the exterior brick wall of the crypt. That work has been successfully completed now for the greater joy of all. Also, while the masonry work was being done on the outside of the crypt, some rather important work was

going on inside as well. We now have a beautiful tile floor and a handsome ceiling. Other appointments are still in process, including more wrought-iron. Our first stone altar too, with carvings, was erected in the chapel of Saint Bonosa, replacing the packing crate frame that was there from the early days.



Whoever sows love reaps love. This adage says so much about the spiritual life and about life in general! In the movie,

It's a Wonderful Life, the main character is finally saved from financial ruin in his hour of need by the many people he previously had helped out of their own difficulties. As I look back on these first ten years of Our Lady of the Annunciation of Clear Creek Monastery and at the immense help we have received from so many good souls, I see that we have reaped much love.

Your generosity has helped us through many difficult times, and for this generosity I want to assure you — on behalf of the entire community — of our profound gratitude. Some skeptics criticize our letters as amounting to little more than a fundraising scheme. With the experience of having to provide for the necessities of a growing community for a decade now, I am quite persuaded that it is really not about *fundraising*, but is rather an intense and wonderful process of *friend-raising*.

And so I want, once again, to wish each and every one of you — our Friends — a very Blessed and Merry Christmas. Whatever causes for sadness we may see around the family hearth — whatever empty chairs or signs of hard times — the love of God, expressed by Divine Wisdom in the Child in His virginal Mother's arms, is a force of joy that no sadness can ever overpower.

br. Philip Anderson, Prior

br. Philip Anderson, Prior