



A PEAL OF BELLS AND THE BIRTH OF AN ABBEY

Lent 2010

Dear Friend of Clear Creek,

When the three great brass bells arrived here at Our Lady of Clear Creek Monastery in early January, little did we know that they would soon ring out in celebration of the most important news in our ten year history. The bells were a gift from a “daughter” foundation of Fontgombault Abbey, and arrived from France by boat at the beginning of the new year. A kind friend of the monastery drove a large truck all the way to Texas to retrieve them. These are very good bronze bells (they weigh almost three tons), and together they form a “peal” — a set of three tones that are in perfect harmony, on the notes D, F, and G. Having already been consecrated, each bell has her name inscribed in Latin: Maria Joanna Paula is the first, Michaela, the second, and Benedicta Bernarda, the third.

More unusual even than the arrival of the bells was the unannounced visit of Father Abbot of Fontgombault, Dom Antoine Forgeot, on February 4th. Soon after his arrival, he told the monks in the Chapter Room that important events would be taking place on February 10th and 11th.

In the meantime, several monks were doing their best to set up the peal of bells so that they might be rung, despite the fact that the church and bell tower of the monastery have yet to be built. Along with the bells themselves, the boat from France brought the framework that will go inside the future bell-tower: the belfry, upon which bells will be hung. In the absence of a bell-tower, this belfry was set up on the ground near a door leading into the crypt.

Despite many adverse conditions, including a snowstorm and much rain, the peal of bells stood ready in their earthbound belfry on Wednesday, February 10th, feast of Saint Scholastica, the holy sister of Saint Benedict.

After the High Mass celebrated by Father Philip Anderson, Prior of Clear Creek, the monks were convoked to the Chapter Room, where Father Abbot Antoine read the letter of the Abbot of Solesmes whereby Clear Creek Priory was erected as an Abbey *sui juris*. Immediately after this announcement, the great bells were set in motion by three young monks, pulling the long ropes. Their joyful and solemn sound was a music more familiar to Angels, perhaps, than to the deer and other animals of the forest surrounding the new abbey. In any case, it was a music that struck a deep chord in the monastic soul of the Brothers of Clear Creek and in the hearts of the many faithful who had been outside awaiting this momentous news.



Foundation for the Annunciation Monastery of Clear Creek

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



But more was to come.

Father Abbot Forgeot celebrated the High Mass of Our Lady of Lourdes on February 11th. The date marked the tenth anniversary of the official opening of Our Lady of Clear Creek. All the monks were once again convoked to the Chapter Room after Mass. In a spiritually and emotionally packed discourse, Father Abbot Forgeot spoke of the role of the abbot in a monastery, exhorting the brothers to be ever more obedient and attentive to the leadership they would receive from their new superior. He also

formulated the wish that our two monasteries, Fontgombault and Clear Creek, would continue to have close fraternal ties even now that the American foundation had come of age.

Then came the moment to name the first abbot of Our Lady of the Annunciation of Clear Creek Abbey. In our monasteries, the abbot is normally elected by the members of the Chapter, but it is the founding abbot who names the very first abbot. His choice fell upon the Prior of Clear Creek, Father Philip Anderson, who accepted the nomination, trusting in the better judgment of the wise old abbot he had known for so many years.

The installation of the newly named Abbot of Clear Creek was scheduled for 5:30 that afternoon. At 5:20, the great bells rang out again. For a third time, the community came to the Chapter room to hear the confirmation of the nomination given in a message from the Abbot of Solesmes in the name of the Holy See. Father Anderson recited on his knees, before all, the required act of faith and promise of fidelity. He was then led to the abbatial seat in the Chapter Room and received the pectoral cross and zucchetto.

A procession then formed to lead him first to the door of the crypt-chapel where he kissed the crucifix and was incensed. The procession then entered the chapel to the chant of the *Te Deum*. Before the altar, Father Abbot of Fontgombault pronounced several prayers over the new Abbot. The latter then was led to the abbatial seat in the choir, where he received the "obedience" of all his monks, each in turn kneeling before him and placing joined hands in his and receiving the accolade.

Bishop Edward J. Slattery of Tulsa will confer the abbatial blessing upon Father Abbot Anderson on April 10th. We look forward to seeing many of you on that joyful occasion.

br. Francis Bethel, prior

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A WORD FROM FATHER ABBOT ANDERSON

As you may well imagine, I count more than ever on your prayers. The pectoral cross that the abbot wears would be much too heavy, were it not for the spiritual support that you can offer. Our joy is great here at Clear Creek, but many challenges still lie ahead for Our Lady of Clear Creek Abbey. I wish you a holy and fervent Lenten season, in spiritual expectation of the joys of Easter.

+ br. Philip Anderson, abbot

+br. Philip Anderson, abbot of Our Lady of Clear Creek Abbey