



## BUILDING HEAVENWARD . . . AT LAST!

June 2010

Dear Friend of Clear Creek,

As a great Christian author of antiquity (Theophilus, *Letter to Autolytus, II, 13*) pointed out, when God decided to build the world He started with the roof, that is, with the heavens, and then worked His way down. For us poor mortals construction happens the other way around, beginning under the surface of the earth and continuing upward — out of the ground into the air — until the ridgeline is reached and the bell tower completed.

Thanks to your help, the monks of Clear Creek Abbey have been blessed with several large and beautiful buildings, but the most important of them, the church, has remained below ground level in the form of a crypt. By the grace of God, however, we plan to begin construction of our church in a few weeks; at long last, God's house will rise up out of the earth. Such a prospect fill our hearts with great joy.

We have often characterized our building projects as a way of “Building Something Beautiful for God” and we have spoken of a “Monastery to Last a Thousand Years.” As this construction stretches out over the years, some have begun to wonder if, indeed, it is not *the construction project itself* that is destined to last a thousand years! However, considering the history of monastic construction projects over the centuries, we have made quite good progress in a little over ten years. In the larger scheme of things, progress could hardly have been more rapid.

Although as a monk I dislike speaking about the financial side of things, many of you have asked where we stand in this regard. The simple truth is that the type of construction project we are engaged in involves expenses that are quite reasonable in the long-run, but rather overwhelming in the here-and-now.

It would be no exaggeration to say that what we have been able to accomplish thus far is a kind of miracle. There will be many more expenses, but God has deep pockets and will surely send what is needed, as needed. He often does it through you. We simply have to forge ahead.

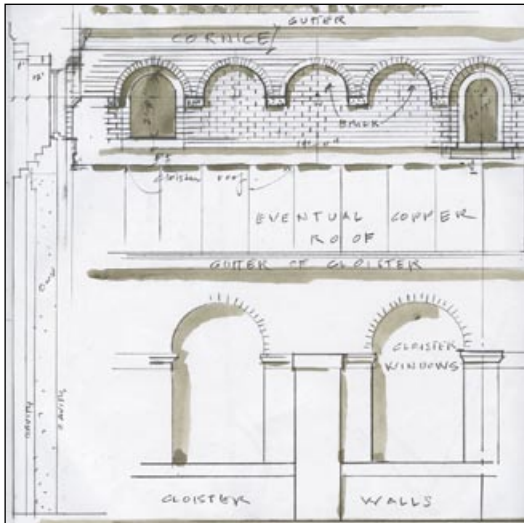
This is not to say that we feel free to disregard the hard reality of economics as they exist in America today, nor that we can throw prudence to the wind. Nevertheless, we are engaged in an unusual project, one based on faith and a supernatural vision of the world. So we continue to build, not because this is reasonable in terms of mere dollars and cents, but because it makes complete sense to build the best and most beautiful church we can for the glory of God. And our current financial situation allows us now to take a significant step.



Foundation for the Annunciation Monastery of Clear Creek

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The current phase of construction provides for the building of the nave of the church and the crossing (forming the two arms, as it were of the form of the Cross) up to the height of at least twenty-five feet. If resources do not allow us to continue further, then a temporary roof will be placed on the partial edifice, thereby solving the terrible problem we have had with water leaking into the crypt. Although the completed church will be twice as high as what we are now preparing to construct, the partial church will be a rather imposing structure in itself.



If you have never taken a close look at the layout of a traditional church — such as the Romanesque church we have designed for Clear Creek — you might be surprised how much theology is contained in the design. Mind impregnates matter; in the words of our Blessed Lord — the very stones seem to cry out. But if you had asked the builders of a Romanesque Church in the 11<sup>th</sup> Century: “What theological view guided you in the construction of this church?” they might well have looked at you in dismay.

In other words, Romanesque builders were not theorists. They were practical men, but their whole life was guided by faith and permeated with the liturgy. Without being aware of it, they manifested their faith in the buildings they made. With time, they realized the close relationship existing between the practical edifices they had erected and their understanding of the world, as they discovered with

amazement that these churches expressed in stone what they believed in their souls. Thus, in building they created a tangible expression of the mystery of God and of Christ, as well as of the calling of man to eternal life — a contemplation in stone.

The rounded vaults, which were primarily designed for solidity and acoustical purposes, evoked for them the sky — Heaven along with the whole supernatural world of Christ in glory and of the Saints. The vertical elements which supported the vault of the nave and the arch of the portal were a symbol of the earthly realities as understood by the men of antiquity, who were familiar with the four winds, the four parts of the earth, and the harmony of the cosmos.

The capitals which served as supports for the form of the arches during their construction received a spiritual meaning and were carved accordingly. They marked the boundary between the earthly world below and the heavenly one above. The ascending levels of the steps — from the portal to the sanctuary — made the faithful physically experience the fact that spiritual life is a progressive purification and an ascent towards Christ represented by the altar. Stained-glass windows, frescoes, sculptures and other appointments added to the effect.

Despite its solid walls, a Romanesque church is transparent: the outside architecture reveals the interior features, that is to say the nave, the aisles and various the levels mentioned above. When entering the church, the faithful find themselves surrounded by the blessed Saints, their Queen and Christ Himself. The whole Church is there: the suffering Church of the Purgatory, the militant Church on earth, and the glorious one in Heaven. This gathering of the faithful takes on its full meaning in the solemn celebration of Holy Mass and the Divine Office.

Such is the lofty ideal to which our labors at Clear Creek aspire. Whether it is the work accomplished by construction companies, by artisans, or by the monks themselves, all tends towards a unity of vision that is meant to be the visible continuation of the hidden monastic prayer. As we continue to build — Heavenward now, at last — we know that we can count on your faithful support, both in terms of providing the physical bricks and stones, and, above all, in your assistance at the spiritual construction site, where Angels direct the work and prayers are palpable.

+ br. Philip Anderson, abbot

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