



## BUILDING THE HIVE

Feast of the Assumption 2010

Dear Friend of Clear Creek,



*omina Angelorum, ora pro nobis.*

There is a popular French saying to the effect that “it is the queen bee that makes the hive”, *c’est la reine qui fait la ruche*. In a monastery such as ours this image has a religious counter-part. We like to think that the Blessed Virgin Mary is the true Abbess of the place: it is she who stands behind the abbot and invisibly radiates spiritual life to the community. This is a kind of chivalrous notion, a throwback, perhaps, to the Middle Ages — some might think it slightly tinged with Romanticism. Nevertheless, it is a fact that we live our day-to-day existence in the mysterious presence of our Patron Saint, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and we are quite happy with the arrangement.

Recently, I have written you regarding the important construction project we are now engaged in, as the stone and brick masons prepare to raise the walls of the Abbey church. But many of you wonder about the *monks themselves*: how we are developing as a community, how the “hive” is growing. The glorious feast of the Assumption of Mary, our “Abbess”, seems like a good time to share with you some of the events — the bigger and the smaller — affecting the monastic family.

As I write this letter the total number of monks belonging to Our Lady of Clear Creek Abbey stands at thirty-three (the perfect age of Christ).

We are expecting a new Postulant in a few days and several other candidates have been accepted for next year. We currently have twelve young men in formation (the novitiate group), of which two are Postulants, five are canonical Novices, and five have made their first Profession (for three years).

During the next academic year five of our monks will be studying Philosophy and four will be in Theology. At present all the course work is done at the Abbey. We will eventually have to send some of the younger monks to acquire their Licentiate of Sacred Theology. Perhaps some day we will even have a Doctor in Theology!

As for major events in the life of the Abbey, 2010 has been quite rich. In January we had an **ordinary canonical visitation**, led by a French abbot, Dom Piron of *Kergonan* Abbey, and the abbot of our Canadian Abbey of *Saint-Benoît-du-Lac*, Dom André Laberge. Dom Laberge, who is quite an accomplished musician, gave us a beautiful organ concert at the end of the visitation. Being young at heart, he also took part in a vigorous snow-ball fight with the novices following the concert. In previous letters we have already mentioned the official raising of Clear Creek Monastery to

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the **status of Abbey *sui juris*** on February 10<sup>th</sup>, followed by the naming of the first abbot of Clear Creek Abbey the next day. The **abbatial blessing** took place on April 10<sup>th</sup>.

Other important moments included the *Mandatum* ceremony or beginning of the canonical novitiate for Brother Joseph Willett and the Solemn Profession of Brother James Middeldorp on August 6<sup>th</sup>. We are looking forward to the Simple Profession of Brother Jereme Hudson on September 8<sup>th</sup>.

Among the less solemn but nevertheless important events that make up the daily existence of the monastic community it might be well to mention a series of voice lessons given to us by a

very competent musician from Vancouver, Canada.

Over several days, Mr. Mark Donnelly taught us how to get the best results from our voices, for the praise and glory of God in our practice of Gregorian chant. We plan to host again this year, as usual, a Gregorian Chant Weekend from October 15-17. This is a session of instruction, both for beginners and for those already familiar with chant.

Otherwise we continue to adapt to the climate as well as to the fauna and flora of Oklahoma.

In order to survive the heat of the summer here, we have adopted the custom of a brief



**Solemn Profession of Brother James Middeldorp, August 6, 2010.**

siesta after the noon meal, and we change to white habits during the hottest season. Although the founding of a contemplative monastic life following the Solesmes tradition — issuing from that of the great Abbey of Cluny — has and continues to be quite a challenge in this more severe climate than what the monks knew in France, we hope with the grace of God, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Abbess of Clear Creek, to meet the challenge and to continue to put down roots for a Monastery to Last a Thousand Years (and more).

In October I will be traveling to France in order to take part in the celebrations for the millennium of Solesmes Abbey. If the Benedictine life could be lived there, next to the Sarthe river, for a thousand years and counting, why not next to the limpid waters of Clear Creek? But we cannot do it alone. We need helpers for our “hive”, and we count on you to lend us a hand. In return we promise the honey of our poor but fervent prayers and work — *Ora et Labora*. Please continue to help us in this great adventure.

In Our Lord and Our Lady,

+ br. Philip Anderson, abbot

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