

+ ANNUNCIATION

March 25, 2017

Homily of the Right Reverend Dom Philip Anderson, Abbot of Clear Creek Abbey
In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Behold a Virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,
My very dear sons,

Christian antiquity, following traditions modern historians can neither confirm nor deny, recognized the 25th of March as the actual day of Our Lord's death as well as being the day of the Annunciation. It was further argued that the coming of Our Lord at the Annunciation and His death must have coincided with the creation and fall of Adam. And since the world was created in spring, again according to the calculations of the ancients, the Savior was also conceived and died shortly after the equinox of spring. Today's feast commemorating the springtime of the world and the springtime of Salvation, reminds us of the most sublime dialogue ever recorded between God—that is through the intermediary of God's ambassador, Saint Gabriel—and a human creature, the purest Virgin of Nazareth. It was a conversation of pure light, ineffable in its manner and its mystery.

One hundred and one years ago another dialogue took place between another angel of the Lord and some shepherd children. In fact, the children said almost nothing, but only repeated what they heard. This occurred near an obscure village of Portugal in the spring of 1916. The children, while tending their flocks, had been forced to take shelter from a storm, and so they entered a cave, where they proceeded to eat their lunch, say their Rosary, and begin a game they liked to play. In the meantime the weather became sunny and calm again. They had played but for a short while when a strong wind blew that swayed the trees and a sudden white light enveloped them. In the middle of that light appeared a cloud in the form of a young man who said to them: "Fear not! I am the Angel of Peace. Pray with me!" The angel knelt on the ground and bowed very low. The children imitated the angel and repeated his words three times: "My God, I believe, I adore, I hope, and I love You. I beg pardon of You for those who do not believe, do not adore, do not hope, and do not love You." Then he rose and said: "Pray this way. The Hearts of Jesus and Mary are attentive to the voice of your supplications." Such was the first apparition of the Angel of Peace, who would come twice again to the children in order to prepare them for the more important apparitions of Our Lady the following year.

Although the apparitions of Our Lady of Fatima in 1917 belong to the order of private revelation, they have proved to be of immense importance. One Carmelite theologian referred to them as "the prophetic message of the twentieth century."¹ Even if these revelations cannot compare with the definitive Divine Revelation concerning such works as the Creation of the world and the Annunciation given to the Blessed Virgin Mary at Nazareth, they did bring something very substantial, the promise of a new springtime for humanity, a spiritual renewal of the earth. As Our Lady told the eldest of the children, Lucia, referring to the growing tide of Communism that threatened the entire world,

In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to me, and she shall be converted, and a period of peace will be granted to the world.

¹ Father Joseph de Sainte Marie, OCD.

How we yearn to see a more complete fulfillment of that promise! It is true that the ominous threat of world domination by Soviet Communism seems to have been averted, but a more insidious kind of evil, one that is not without relationship to the evil root of Marxism, is very much abroad in our day. More than ever we need that Immaculate Heart, the human heart that received in Faith and immense love the very Son of God at the Annunciation.

But we must not be idle as we await the promises of God. Our Lady came to earth at Fatima to enlist the help of all who could hear her appeal. She taught the children the need to pray—especially the Holy Rosary—and to make sacrifices of reparation. Sacrifice is a notion that has almost disappeared from the modern mind set—even that of Catholics! It is good to see around the abbey walls various initiatives of prayer and pilgrimage. As Saint Augustine said, God, who created us without asking our advice, will not save us without our active cooperation.

May Our Lady of Clear Creek Abbey and its neighboring village become ever more and remain a stronghold, a “keep” of the Immaculate Heart, that is to say a place of prayer and joyful sacrifice, where children can grown up in a climate of peace that is not just the absence of crime, but a tranquility that is built day by day on the grace of God and the spiritual collaboration of all. Such a stronghold is not a country club that keeps the poor and undesirable away, but a citadel of God open to all men and women of good will and from which generous souls will go out to transform the world, not with utopian pipe dreams, but with a strong Catholic faith and dogged realism.

Our Lady of the Annunciation, Our Lady of the Rosary, Our Lady of Fatima—the Lady with the Immaculate Heart—pray for us. Amen.