



ANCHORED IN THE STARS

October 2018

Dear Friend of Clear Creek Abbey,

While news from the nation's capital and around America—truly a nation divided—continues to be unsettling; as scandals and rumors of corruption within the Catholic Church unleash their confusion upon us week-by-week, we instinctively search for a sure point of reference, one that will provide our lives with stability and ensure our peace. Where on earth shall we find it?



When, a few years ago here at Clear Creek, it came time to devise a coat-of-arms for the newly established abbey (this happened in 2010), someone wisely suggested we include a cross on our shield. As the most likely place for this cross turned out to be near the bottom tip of the crest, beneath the silver waves symbolizing Clear Creek (a stream that runs through our property), there came the idea to make of this cross an anchor cross—a representation of the Cross in the form of a ship's anchor—a symbol that was used in Christian antiquity.

The anchor as a Christian symbol is rich in theological and spiritual significance. Many are the meditations one might compose upon this theme. A biblical passage that comes to mind is the Epistle to the Hebrews speaking of

the hope that is set before us: Which we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and firm, and which entereth in even within the veil; Where the forerunner Jesus is entered for us, made a high priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedech.¹

So here it is, our anchor, our attachment, stretching beyond the veil of this world, beyond the vanishing point of earthly horizons—an anchor in the stars! This may seem a somewhat awkward metaphor, that of an anchor going upward rather than down into the depths of the sea, but there is a kind of supernatural wisdom in this way of speaking.

Like all Christians, we monks survive the assaults of doubt and discouragement that the flesh is heir to thanks to the theological virtue of hope. Our vows, moreover, oblige us to have an even greater detachment from earthly things than our fellow human beings, and we try never to forget that we have here below, as Saint Paul reminds us, “no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.”² Far from us is the modernist viewpoint that all human endeavors should be anchored entirely in the “here and now.” Never must we fix our hearts and minds upon the visible realities

¹ Hebrews 6:18-20.

² Hebrews 13:14.

upon this earth to the exclusion of what transcends human history and which constitutes the plan of God. On the contrary, as people of strong faith, we must see the “forest beyond the trees” and, better still, the stars towering above the forest.

It is in such a perspective of ardent hope that the monk seeks to live each day, and he often succeeds despite his human weakness. Those too who live in proximity to the monastery and who likewise endeavor to anchor their lives in the sure hope promised by God in His crucified Son often encounter a precious help for their lives amid the dark perspectives of more secular matters. Such is the manner and mood of a community of families grouped around a Benedictine abbey.

But must we then give up all temporal hope of improving the society around us? Should we not even bother voting, for example? The answer to this question lies in the same direction as the above-mentioned supernatural solution, along the rope that ties us to our anchor in the stars. Those whose faith and hope are robust, precisely because they are firmly anchored in God, naturally strive to help those around them at every level. To the man dying of thirst the Christian offers the cup of water. To the young person confused by the chaotic voices of a society caught in a tailspin the anchored adult proffers the consoling drink of kind words that give hope, both for eternity and for the challenges of the here and now. Indeed, we still make our way to the Kingdom of God through the concrete realities of everyday life.

Too many Americans have lost their spiritual bearings. The confusion may come in terms of wavering religious convictions, with respect to the meaning of marriage, or in terms of the simplest of human realities, such as basic civility in public discourse. Not all have fallen into this social disorientation and disintegration, but we must help one another hold on for dear life to the sanity and sanctity of our Christian calling.

With your precious help we monks of Our Lady of Clear Creek Abbey intend to continue our pilgrim way along the lifeline leading to that anchor fixed in Heaven beyond the veil, and we hope to take you with us! Please be assured of our immense thanks for all you have done for us and continue to do for us in this great adventure of Faith and of monastic life. May our common Hope never fail whatever challenges assail us in the days to come.

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