



A TIME TO EVERY PURPOSE . . . 20 YEARS

August 2019

Dear Friend of Clear Creek Abbey,

F*ugit irreparabile tempus*, sang the high Roman poet. As Christians we do not look upon the flight of time as a loss, but as a movement toward something better in the plan of God. So after these 20 years of monastic life at Clear Creek, what remains in the hearts and minds of our monks is—up and beyond the rest—a sense of thanksgiving to God for the past along with hope for what is still to come. Truly, the founding and development of our abbey has been a thing wonderful to contemplate—and you, our many friends, have been a great part of it. As our 20th anniversary approaches, I cannot find more fitting words than the ones I wrote ten years ago, to describe the memorable arrival in Oklahoma:

Late in the evening of September 15th 1999, as we stepped off the plane and entered the Tulsa airport, we thirteen founding monks were wondering exactly what we would find in this new land. For some of the founders it was the first time they had set foot in the United States. America did not let us down. An enthusiastic welcome-party awaited us inside. This was our first encounter with “The Friends of Clear Creek.” These Midwestern welcomers, chose to sing most appropriately on this occasion “Home on the Range.” And, indeed, we were already home in some sense, and, yet, the night was still young...

For those who have never attempted it, I will say that navigating the backwoods of Cherokee County Oklahoma on a moonless night is not as easy as it sounds, even nowadays. That night there were no GPS devices involved, and some little disagreement emerged among the various volunteer drivers as to how exactly to get to the monks’ new “home on the range,” somewhere out there amid the rugged foothills of the Ozarks. Cars got separated.

When the caravan—or rather the various parts thereof—finally reached the ranch-turned-monastery, it was already past midnight. The feast of Our Lady of Sorrows was over, and a new day was in gestation. Before dealing with some urgent practical matters (for example that suitcase belonging to a lady living on the other side of Tulsa, inadvertently picked up at the airport by someone thinking it belonged to a monk), Father Abbot Forgeot of Fontgombault led the group of monastic founders to the loft of the big log-cabin, where a small chapel with the Blessed Sacrament had been reserved in a small tabernacle. Here is the little Divine Office we sang on that memorable occasion:



Founders and their first postulant in 1999.

Ecce ancilla Domini, fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum, Alleluia (sung Antiphon)

Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it done to me according to Thy word, Alleluia.

Psalm 112, *Laudate Pueri Dominum*, Praise the Lord, ye children.

V/ *Ave Maria, gratia plena*, Hail Mary, full of grace.

R/ *Dominus tecum*. The Lord is with Thee

Collect of the Feast of the Annunciation.



Founders with Abbot of Solesmes on Eagle's Bluff in 1999.

It was the first time we prayed together as a community at Clear Creek. Our hope was then and continues to be that the Divine praises will never again cease in this place until the end of the world.

It would be a bit long to tell here of the first day at our new home, how we went exploring the property, admiring all the wild animals and being frankly surprised by a giant emu that surged out of the brush all of a sudden (Father Abbot Forgeot laughed so much he was in tears: he said he had been expecting many strange things in Oklahoma, but not that—pas ça!). But those first encounters with the land will have to be narrated elsewhere...

Twenty years later, the Clear Creek story is by no means complete. There remains much for us to do on multiple fronts. We have now completed about one third of our permanent buildings: the church in particular needs to rise to its definitive height. We are constantly working to enhance our land and to perfect our various places of worship and work. Each day we strive to sing the Divine Office more perfectly and to grow in our intellectual studies—especially *lectio divina*—not to mention the essential effort toward becoming saints.

We live in difficult times. The truth, both that of natural law, whose principles served as the very basis for our American Constitution, and that revealed by God in the teaching of the Catholic Church, are under heavy assault. I hope to return to this vital subject some time soon. In any case we are not afraid of this challenge: monks are made to bear witness to the truth, as did the martyrs of antiquity and those closer to us in time—even at this moment.

May Our Lady of the Annunciation, who is our Patron Saint and constant inspiration, help us monks and all our friends make of our lives something beautiful for God. That will remain our prayer intention and our work assignment for the next twenty years.

+ br. Philip Anderson, abbot

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