

## + Requiem Mass

For the Right Reverend Antoine Forgeot  
Our Lady of Clear Creek Abbey  
August 26, 2020

*Laudemus viros gloriosos, et parentes nostros in generatione sua. Let us now praise men of renown, writes the author of the Book of Ecclesiastes, and our fathers in their generation.*<sup>1</sup>

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,  
My very Dear Sons,

Today it is our duty—sad and solemn, but also joyful and full of hope in the Lord—to celebrate this Requiem Mass in honor of a great monk and priest, the abbot and then emeritus abbot of Our Lady of Fontgombault Abbey in France, the man who led the original founders of this monastery of Clear Creek over from France, almost twenty-one years ago. It would be impossible to describe in detail all we owe Father Abbot Antoine Forgeot, but, as we pray for his soul, we shall do our best to honor his memory and to continue in faith the mission he gave us from the beginning. I shall simply attempt here, in few words, to capture something of the spiritual portrait of our beloved abbot.

Saint Benedict would have his monks keep the reality of death before their eyes each day, *Mortem quotidie ante oculos suspectam habere.*<sup>2</sup> That way they are not surprised when their last day comes. It is all part of the supernatural logic of being simply what we really are, of living in the present moment, of remaining transparent before God and men. Father Abbot Antoine certainly lived according to that spiritual program.

During his more than 33 years as abbot of Fontgombault, in a time when, due to a crisis in vocations, few religious communities were expanding (let alone founding new monasteries), Dom Antoine completed the foundation of one abbey and successfully founded three others, including Clear Creek, while all the time Fontgombault itself kept growing. He was instrumental in fostering such new clerical institutes as the Priestly Fraternity of Saint Peter, the Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest, and the Community of Saint Martin. Countless were those who came to Fontgombault to seek his counsel in a time of liturgical and doctrinal confusion. Each year he would travel to Rome in the summer to confer with Cardinal Ratzinger, until the latter was elected to the See of Peter. Although still in good health and vigorous of mind, when he felt the moment was opportune he resigned his office as abbot and worked diligently to assure a smooth transition under the new abbot of his beloved Fontgombault.

Dom Forgeot's spiritual palette, though never extravagant, had many colors. In addition to the Benedictine spirituality he knew so well, and, of course, his ardent Eucharistic piety and devotion to the Holy See, like many of his generation, he was a fervent admirer of Saint Therese of Lisieux. He also had a real fondness for the Carmelite from the Holy Land, Saint Mariam of Jesus Crucified, the "little Arab", whose feast is celebrated today. Also in later years he studied

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<sup>1</sup> Eccles. 44:1.

<sup>2</sup> *Holy Rule*, Chapter 4, "On the Instruments of Good Works", n. 47.

the works of Saint Faustina. But it was his Marian devotion especially that fortified Dom Antoine to face the great task that was his, and which he summarized in his motto taken from the feast of the Assumption, *Ad Superna Semper Intenti*, “Having [our souls] ever intent upon the things on high.”

In a recent interview published in France, the current abbot of Fontgombault, Dom Jean Pateau, tells us some interesting things about his predecessor, underlining that luminous realism of his way of life, notably in terms of his way of celebrating Holy Mass:

He was opposed both to that banality that leads to the loss of the sense of sacredness, and, on the other hand, to that ritualism, which, placing an exaggerated emphasis on the rite, also leads to a loss of the sense of the sacred. When watching Father Abbot Antoine celebrate [Holy Mass] one was struck both by his great fidelity to the liturgical rubrics, and as well by his interior quality, of his self-effacement aimed at being as transparent as possible before the mystery. He was like a window opening to God.<sup>3</sup>

Such was Father Abbot Antoine during his long life as a monk and an abbot. So we, his sons in the monastic life, hope to be at least in some small measure.

At the end of the moving homily he pronounced in Saint Peter’s Square, before an immense crowd, during the funeral of Pope—now Saint—John Paul II, on April 8, 2005, Cardinal Ratzinger turned in spirit to the deceased Pope, addressing him directly in unforgettable terms. Changing the words just slightly, I would like repeat the same words to Dom Forgeot, the good friend of Cardinal Ratzinger and Pope Benedict XVI:

We can be sure that our beloved [Father Abbot] is standing today at the window of the Father’s house, that he sees us and blesses us. Yes, bless us, [Father Abbot]. We entrust your dear soul to the Mother of God, your Mother, who guided you each day and who will guide you now to the eternal glory of her Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Interview, *Pays Basque*, August 22, 2020.

<sup>4</sup> Homily of Cardinal Ratzinger at funeral Mass of Pope John Paul II, April 8, 2005.