



Homily for the Day of the Cornerstone Ceremony

**The Most Rev. Edward J. Slattery, Bishop of Tulsa
November 21, 2003**

*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit
as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen.*



If every present moment exists forever in the eternal mind of God and if all that is or has been or ever will be ultimately serves the Mystery of Providence by leading us through the Son to the Father, then we stand in this graced moment, conscious that all of our history converges in this moment.

Thus we are gathered here together on the feast of the Presentation, on a particularly mild Friday in November, in a remote corner of rural Oklahoma, to bless this first stone of the Monastery Church of Our Lady of the Annunciation and we believe with all our hearts that this expresses the will of God and for this reason, for the building of this structure, God brought the first pioneer monks from Fontgombault in France here to Clear Creek.

All things are seen by God and the building of this community was part of the plan and the purpose of the founding of the Benedictine Congregation of Solesmes. Certainly Prosper Gueranger never saw this in his mind's eye, never thought of Oklahoma's missions when he bought the ruined buildings of Solesmes in December of 1832 – but it was for this day and in order that this building be erected that five priests joined Pere Gueranger in 1833 in a restored Benedictine life and for the sake of this day, that Pope Gregory in 1837 raised Solesmes to the rank of an Abbey.



**Charter inserted in
the Cornerstone
during the Ceremony**

At some point in a mystery too deep for us to fathom, we stand here this afternoon conscious that our ranks are crowded by every saint who ever wore the habit of Benedict, that our number is invisibly increased by every holy monk who ever rose in the first hours of the morning, before the sun, in prayerful anticipation of Our Lord's return, that our congregation is swollen thick with the heavenly attendance of every abbot and every lay brother who over the course of seventeen hundred years, from Egypt to Syria, from Ireland to Ethiopia, from Paris and the Charterhouse of London, to places more remote than this, simply surrendered their lives to Christ in the hard accountability of a rule and a chapter - but surrendered them easily and joyfully, convinced that nothing was to be preferred to the love of God.

The saints of heaven stand here with us and confirm what we do. Though unseen, the angels of God stand here with us to protect what we do. And what we do is build a house that will stand for a thousand years to the glory of God, a place of prayer and penance, of mercy and redemption, a place where heaven and earth interpenetrate and holiness becomes the cowl we wear to Vespers and the charity of brothers becomes the oil of gladness that anoints the head of Aaron. Here the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ will be offered to the glory of God the Father by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Know for certain, my people, that encompassed within the walls which will be

erected here, the redemption promised to Adam after the fall will be offered in its fullness, the sons promised to sterile Abraham will be completed like the sands of the sea, the freedom promised to stuttering Moses will be rendered in full, the kingdom promised to randy David will be crowned and the restoration of a fallen Israel, prophesied by Isaiah, will be accomplished in a single moment of faith, in the heartbeat of a believer, and all those who come to participate in the death and resurrection of Jesus will receive His Body and Blood as a pledge of eternal life.

For a hundred hundred years monks will enter this place as if it were heaven itself, that night and day they might praise the Father for his mercy. In the morning they will anticipate the celebration of the Sacrifice of Jesus and in the afternoon they will recall that same Sacrifice, so that in the continual round of prayer offered in this monastic church, Jesus will center every day and permeate every moment.

We have no idea what the world will be like a thousand years from now, what governments might rule or what technologies we might be known, but we know that here Christ will reign and peace will flourish, until all things are brought together and made one in Him and fallen mankind, redeemed by His blood, is presented back to God, whole and entire.

The Diocese of Tulsa is blessed by the presence this afternoon of Abbot Antoine Forgeot and as the Bishop of Tulsa, I wish to express my personal thanks to Father Abbot, Father Prior and to all the monks of this community. Your continual presence among us with the hidden sacrifices of your contemplative life, encourage us to approach the throne of God's mercy with deeper faith, truer hope, and more honest contrition, that we might live new lives in charity, building those lives on Jesus Christ, the stone rejected by men, but chosen by God to be the cornerstone.

Let me say finally that I wish to offer this day as a new beginning to the Mother of God, on the Feast of her Presentation, invoked under the title of Our Lady of the Annunciation of Clear Creek. Mary is our mother and the model of holiness; as we recall her unconditional fiat - may we surrender ourselves as well to the plan of Divine Providence and trust that God who began this good work in us will bring it to completion.

May Our Lady of the Annunciation of Clear Creek pray for us.

Allocution of Dom Antoine Forgeot, Abbot of Notre Dame de Fontgombault

Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

I want to thank you also, dear friends of this Priory of Our Lady of the Annunciation of Clear Creek — all of you, present or absent — for the support you never stop giving to us in so many ways. May the Lord reward you and may He hear the prayer of the monks especially at the conventual Mass of each Sunday, which is sung for

the intentions of our benefactors. A big "thank-you" also to all those who work on this construction site, at all levels. I know that the work is all carried out in a good spirit. May God bless you all!

You will have no difficulty understanding my haste to give to my little flock a church in which the holy Liturgy can be celebrated more worthily than in our temporary oratory, and a more adapted lodging to shelter the community from the rigors of the Oklahoman climate, in summer as well as in winter.

The construction site, whose foundations Bishop Slattery has come to bless, promises to become one day "something very beautiful for God", to use the expression of Mother Teresa of Calcutta. You can easily guess that its achievement is totally beyond the financial means of the Motherhouse, our Abbey of Our Lady of Fontgombault.

So I want to ask for your help in a very special way. I want to ask you for the support of your fervent, persevering and confident prayer, to ask God to give us the means to bring to term, and without interruption, what has been so well begun. If we ask for it with humility, and if we are faithful, God will raise the necessary help without any trouble.

Thank you again for your union in prayer, especially with the Infant Jesus, our Little King, and with Saint Joseph, to whom we have entrusted our interests. Of course, these are inseparable from Our Lady, the patroness of this monastery. It is for her that we are going to sing now, before a brief friendly encounter and the chanting of Vespers.

Salve Regina.