

## Benedict József Monostori (1929-2014)

József Monostori was born on July 4, 1919 in Kővágóórs, Hungary, on the northern shore of Lake Balaton, Hungary's most popular vacation spot. He was the fourth of five children. As a toddler, he moved to Budapest with his family, where he grew up.

Always an excellent student, József realized by the end of his high school years that he wanted to be both a priest and a teacher. To pursue this vocation, he entered the Cistercian Monastery of Zirc, receiving the novice habit and the religious name of Benedict on August 29, 1937. He made simple vows on August 28, 1938. He completed studies in philosophy and theology and on May 16, 1944 the future Cardinal Joseph Mindszenty ordained him to the priesthood, just before the end of World War II in Europe. In addition studying for the priesthood, he pursued studies to become a teacher of mathematics and physics.

In the fall of 1945, he was assigned to teach math and physics in the Cistercians' school in Székesfehérvár, Hungary. This first teaching assignment came to an end in 1948 when the communist government nationalized all the Cistercians' schools. Fr. Benedict then was put in charge of the young monks in formation in Zirc, where he also taught them philosophy. This teaching job was also brought to an end when in 1950 the Communists

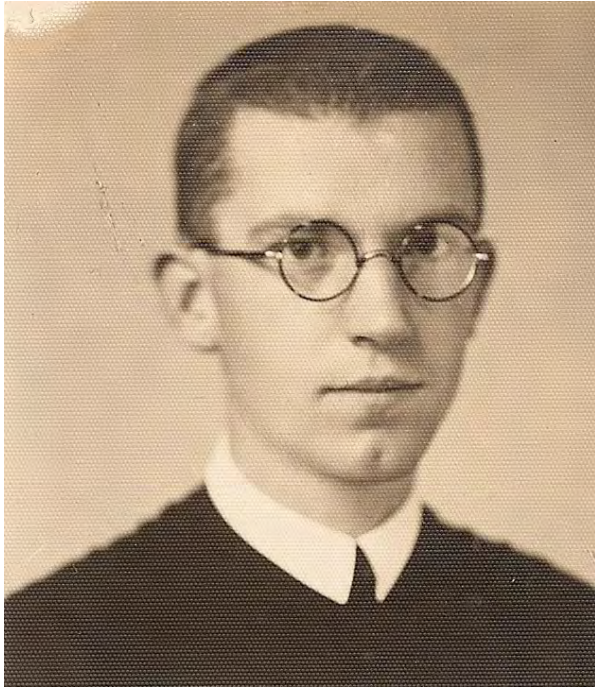


suppressed the Cistercian Order in Hungary along with most other religious orders.

Fr. Benedict joined a group of twenty young Cistercians in an adventurous escape from Communist Hungary to Austria. Walking at night through minefields, evading guards with watchdogs, and crossing barbed wire fences, the group reached Austria. Tragically, eight monks were detected as refugees and returned to Hungary, where they were subjected to show trials, imprisoned, and tortured. Fr. Benedict revisited his memories of



the harrowing escape throughout his life, but especially in his last days.



Fr. Benedict accompanied the young Cistercian refugees to Rome and served as their prefect for the following year. He obtained a graduate degree in philosophy from the Pontifical Academy Sant' Anselmo and then pursued a doctorate in philosophy at the University of Salamanca, Spain. His superiors soon asked him to join the Cistercian community in Spring Bank, Wisconsin, where the Hungarians exiled from their monastery in Zirc were gathering.

Fr. Benedict was among the first Cistercians to come to Dallas in 1954. In 1956 he was one of nine Cistercians on the original faculty of The University of Dallas, where he initially taught math and philosophy. He was soon asked, however, to study physics. He earned his PhD in physics at Fordham University in 1964. Fr. Benedict served as the

Acting Chair and then the Chair of the Physics Department from 1962. He retired in 1989.

Throughout his life, Fr. Benedict enjoyed assisting in parishes throughout the Dallas-Fort Worth area. Upon retirement from full-time teaching, he became the chaplain for the Holy Family of Nazareth Sisters in Grand Prairie, where he served for twenty-two years. In the Cistercian Monastery here in Dallas, Fr. Benedict served as Prior from 1975 to 1988. Fr. Benedict's greatest joy was to see fulfilled in the Cistercian Monastery Our Lady of Dallas that dream with which he and so many Cistercians fled Hungary.

Fr. Benedict died peacefully in the monastery on the morning of Sept. 22.

May he rest in peace.

