

Fr. David László Balás

(1929-2014)

David László Balás was born on Aug 6, 1929 in Budapest, Hungary, the only child of his parents László Balás and Maria Borbély. At the age of ten he was enrolled at the Saint Emery Cistercian School in Budapest. As the Soviet army approached the city in the last month of the Second World War, his family decided to flee to Western Hungary and then to Germany. His year as a refugee in Germany left him not only with lasting memories but also scars. Under the charismatic leadership of Fr. Lawrence 'Sigmond, his teacher and spiritual director for the last years of high school, he joined the Cistercian Abbey of Zirc as a novice August 29, 1948. He was already filled with a great desire to pursue the study and teaching philosophy and theology.

When the Communist regime officially suppressed the Abbey of Zirc in the summer of 1950, his dream seemed to become impossible. But one month before the monastery was to be vacated, a group of monks found its way out of Hungary and into Austria, smuggled through the virtually impenetrable Iron Curtain. Unfortunately, the partial Soviet occupation of Austria led to the capture of some of the escapees who were then returned to Hungary and to prison. Fr. David belonged to the more fortunate group and reached freedom.

Fr. David made his way to Rome, where in 1950 he began studying philosophy and theology at the Pontifical University of Saint



Anselm, obtaining an STL degree in theology as well as an advanced degree in philosophy. In the Cistercian abbey of Stams, Austria, he was ordained a priest on June 29, 1954. In 1959 he joined the newly founded monastery of Our Lady of Dallas and began teaching philosophy and theology at the University of Dallas. In 1962, he was able to return to Rome to defend his dissertation on the theology of participation in the works of St. Gregory of Nyssa and obtained his doctoral degree (STD) in theology. With the exception of two



academic years (1975-1977) spent teaching at the University of Saint Anselm in Rome, Fr. David taught theology at the University of Dallas, where he also served for some time as Head of the Theology Department and as Graduate Dean. He was the first recipient of the Msgr. John Gulczynsky Chair in Theology.



In 1966 Fr. David was a founding member of the Ecumenical Faculty Seminar on Early Catholic Christianity, where he first presented many of his papers on various topics in Patristic Theology. He was also very active in the American Patristic Society and served a term as its president. Though severely limited by illness during his last years, he continued his theological studies and continued sharing his love of the Church Fathers.

As a professor of theology, Fr. David taught generations of priests. He earned an

exceptional reputation for his erudition and expertise not only among his Catholic colleagues but among a large circle of friends and students from all denominations. Throughout his scholarly endeavors, he remained a priest seeking to understand the faith and to share his understanding with others. With exceptional clarity and a sense of responsibility, Fr. David followed his call to seek and teach the truth.

Fr. David passed away Saturday, Feb. 8, 2014. A Rosary and wake will be held in the Cistercian Monastery Our Lady of Dallas at 7:30 PM, Tuesday, Feb. 11. The Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated in the Monastery as well at 2:00 PM, Wednesday, Feb. 12. Memorials may be made to the Young Monk Education Fund at the Cistercian Abbey, 3550 Cistercian Rd., Irving, Texas 75039.

