

August 2007



A Letter from the Abbey

Cistercian Abbey • Our Lady of Dallas



Briefly

Fifty-year celebration for Frs. Pascal and Matthew

The Golden Jubilee for Fr. Pascal and Fr. Matthew was a happy day for all at the abbey. It was 50 years ago that the two, just eight months after their escape from Hungary, were ordained in the Cistercian Abbey of Zwettl in Austria.

On Sunday, August 12, 2007, they celebrated a Mass of Thanksgiving in the Abbey Church, which was filled with alumni and friends.

Following the Mass, a reception was held in the abbey courtyard (see photos on page 4). The courtyard's new landscaping, designed by Robert Bellamy '71, was completed just in time for the event.

More abbey notes

On the first anniversary of Fr. Henry's death, a group of alumni offered a beautiful memorial chalice to Fr. Bernard. The alumni consisted mostly of members of the classes of '72, '80, '88 and '96 (the classes that Fr. Henry served as form master). The artistry of the chalice and its engraving will beautifully perpetuate the names of the Marton Brothers. The chalice was used by Fr. Bernard as he celebrated the 40th anniversary of his ordination.

■ On August 15, the community gathered for its annual retreat preached by Fr. Mark O'Keefe, a Benedictine from St. Meinrad's Archabbey in Indiana.

■ At the same time, we were saddened by the departure of Br. Abraham Frei who did not feel ready to renew his vows after three years in the abbey.

■ Christmas Midnight Service on December 24: Office of Readings begins at 11:30 pm and is followed immediately by the Midnight Mass. Christmas Day: 9 am, concelebrated High Mass.

■ New Year's Eve, December 31, Eucharistic Adoration 9 am – 12 midnight (with benediction at midnight).



FULL HOUSE Abbot Denis (center) is surrounded by the abbey's twelve brothers.

Three new novices join the abbey

Twelve young monks are now preparing for the priesthood



NEW NOVICES (left to right) Brs. William (Jason Parzynski), Anthony (Ryan Bigney) and John (Paul Bayer).

The abbey's blessings continue to grow.

On August 19, three postulants took the novice habit, receiving the names William (Jason Parzynski), Anthony (Ryan Bigney) and John (Paul Bayer).

The next morning on August 20, the three novices of the previous year, Br. Stephen Gregg, Br. Lawrence Brophy and Br. Nathanael Frei made their first vows. Br. Joseph Van House also renewed his temporary vows.

Currently, the Abbey has twelve brothers preparing for the priesthood.

Please keep them all in your prayers.

Photos by Jim Resch

Saintly inspiration

*Remembering two members of our Hungarian Cistercian family
who are nearing beatification 50-plus years after their untimely deaths.*

By Abbot Denis Farkasfalvy

In the past year, word spread that under Benedict XVI the number of beatifications and canonizations will be significantly lessened. But as far as our community of Dallas is concerned, in the recent past, two cases were making headlines. If the saints are our friends and the fervent supporters of various causes, it may be very appropriate to speak of them briefly now.

Through an amazingly short life, Istvan Kaszap (1916-1935) blitzed through all phases of the path to sainthood. A student for eight years in one of Hungary's centuries-old Cistercian schools in Szekesfehervar, he spent Forms I-IV (grades 5-8) as a good-natured misfit with bad grades.

Few people knew that at the bottom of his soul he nurtured the desire to become a priest by keeping in his drawer the picture of his uncle, a priest who died young. When in 9th grade he asked for admission to the Cistercians' vocation program — a boarding school for minor seminarians in Budapest — he was rejected, because none of his teachers could in good conscience recommend him as a good candidate.

"Pista," as he was called, was deeply shocked at the rejection. But, instead of losing courage, he took it as a wake-up call, or more correctly as a call to conversion. He employed three instruments to transform his life.

As a boy scout he began an intensive program of learning practical skills, working on his character, organizing outings and plays. In the spiritual program of the Sodality of Mary, he began intensive regular prayer life, began to serve mass in the Cistercian Church and chose a spiritual director who guided his steps until graduation. Finally, he joined the school's new program in gymnastics.

The new Physical Education teacher, then just a very young man and only later coach of gymnastics, had just begun his career, searching for young talents to work with. Kaszap turned out to be an exceptional talent who soon became the star of the program.

In the year he graduated, he became one of the region's top athletes. Kaszap's threefold program of self-improvement was most spectacularly evident in the transformation of his academic grades. After failing in the 8th grade in two subjects and getting C's in all other subjects, he graduated with a straight-A report card.

By the spring before graduation he knew for sure that he wanted to become a priest. Methodically he collected information about religious orders and ways of life. To everybody's surprise, after a coincidental encounter with a Jesuit retreat master, he applied to the Jesuits' novitiate in Budapest.

The 18-year-old athlete moved into the novitiate with the full recommendation of his teachers and all the enthusiasm his young heart was able to acquire. However, the two-year program of the novitiate was interrupted by a mysterious illness.

After a couple of months of medical treatment he was sent home for recovery, but then, as his illness reappeared, he had to be dismissed from the novitiate. The doctor of his home town finally identified the cause of his illness: an infection hidden in his tonsils.

Recall that antibiotics did not exist as yet. Since the boy's condition was by then alarming, the doctor decided to remove the tonsils. The surgery was ill-advised.

By now the superb athlete was a shadow of his old self; his run-down body could not handle the operation. The bacterial infection was already spreading, and the boy was hospitalized. Weakened by high fever, in a few days he had to undergo a tracheotomy.

Pista knew he was dying. For the last days of his life he was communicating only by written notes. He wrote his last note while no one was at his bed.

"Mom and Dad, do not cry," he wrote. "We will meet again in heaven. This is my heavenly

birthday!" The nurse found him dead with this note in his hand. His fu-

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We will meet
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— Istvan Kaszap



Just a 19-year-old novice when he died, Istvan Kaszap's inspirational story may make him a saint.

neral attracted a big crowd. But he made all the more impact on his hometown when his autobiographical journals were published. Pista wrote a journal through the last four years of his short life.

His daily comments about his inner life — his studies, the vocation, the inner struggles of self-discipline, his joy in prayer, camping and athletics and the many reflections on his sufferings and approaching death greatly affected many teenagers.

His veneration spread all over Hungary. In 1942-44, comments and reported healings and conversions through his intercession filled pages of a separate weekly magazine. His remains were exhumed and laid to rest in the courtyard of a large church where a large number of pilgrims visit his tomb up to this day.

Unfortunately, the Second World War made any further proceedings for beatification impossible. But his cult remained vigorous. So much so that in the 1960's the Communist party promoted a play which ridiculed his story as a churchly plot, abusing the life and death of a young athlete by turning it into a fraudulent religious icon.

But the flowers were never missing from his grave and his home town kept remembering the saintly young man who fought the good fight and became an "athleta Christi."

Last Spring Pope Benedict XVI, reviewing the top cases submitted for beatification, declared his practice of Christian virtues "as heroic," thus introducing the last phase for beatification. Now only the approval of one closely examined miracle is needed.

Barely ten years after his death, this young man was one of my role models and a chief intercessor on behalf of my own vocation and all the priestly vocations which I have helped.

On October 15, 1950 one would have thought that the novitiate of the suppressed Cistercians in Hungary was finally disbanded, but no, most of them stayed together and began a new style of religious life: in the middle of the world.

One of those who decided to continue religious life in secrecy was Anastasius Brenner. The name given to him as a novice was "Anastasius," but that name was never used in public for the rest of his short life. I recall him by his nickname "Jancsi Brenner." When the novices left the abbey and novitiate of Zirc, no one could have guessed that this bespectacled, short fellow whose eyes looked like flames (so I remember him from the few times we met) would be the only one among them to die as a martyr literally by shedding his blood for the name of Christ soon after his ordination to the priesthood.

He spent the rest of his novitiate in Budapest, making first vows in spite of the government prohibition. In 1951, at the advice of his superiors, John Brenner signed up for the diocesan seminary of his home town and continued his studies for the priesthood there. But he stayed in touch with his novice master and

remained in fact a member of the Cistercians all his life, though in secret.

It was in 1957 after the terrible upheaval of the revolution that he was ordained to the priesthood. His novice master attended the celebration in careful anonymity, but they exchanged letters afterwards. (Did they know that for both of them time was running out and they would soon meet in heaven?) John was assigned to a small parish.

The Communist regime which had just stumbled during the uprising of 1956 was vigorously trying to reassert and consolidate power. But the young priest fully dedicated himself to parish work. His enthusiastic and thoroughly prepared religion classes galvanized the town.

By then the teaching of religion had become "optional," which practically meant registering for classes was not allowed unless both parents showed up to sign the registration forms. And yet in the town of Rábakethely, where Fr. John was teaching, everyone wanted to attend. Even the son of the communist party secretary was seen sitting outside under the windows listening to the priest's classes. The town's leaders were not happy.

A delegation went to the diocesan bishop and asked him to move the zealous priest to another place. The bishop summoned Fr. John and offered him another assignment. Fr. John assured the Bishop that he was not afraid and that it would be a mistake to let down the youth of the town because of intimidation.

The bishop told the officials that for the time being the priest must remain.

"If you are not willing to take care of the problem," the officials ominously muttered, "then we will."

On December 15, Fr. John was awakened by a young man with a request: "My uncle is dying in the neighboring village and is asking for the sacraments." Fr. John dressed, took a host from the tabernacle and walked out into the night.

His body was found the next day on the roadside; his throat was cut, and his body was stabbed 32 times. The town was in an uproar, as was the entire country. The police staged an investigation. The government charged several people with the crime, who were then tried and sentenced, only to be released quietly soon after.

Up to this day no one knows who actually killed the priest. Yet for years, priests were threatened by party officials: "Watch out or you will end up like John Brenner!"

After the Fall of Communism, the process of beatification began in earnest. On December 15, 2006, the bishop of the diocese declared a Fr. John Brenner Year with programs, pilgrimages and prayers for his beatification. It will end on Sunday, December 17, 2007, when in each church of Hungary they will commemorate the 50th anniversary of the martyrdom of the "new Tarsicius," who died while carrying the Eucharist.

He is rightly considered an intercessor for priestly vocations.

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Fr. John Brenner's popular ministry prompted the Communists to murder him.

Abbey Church Services

Office of Readings and Morning Prayer	6 am
Daily Mass Monday through Saturday	6:30 am
Mass on Saturday	9 am
Evening Prayer	6 pm
First Friday Mass	7:30 pm

The Collegium Cantorum of the University of Dallas will join us for Mass on the First Friday of every month, September through December.

Cistercian Abbey Our Lady of Dallas
3550 Cistercian Road
Irving, Texas 75039

Fr. Pascal & Fr. Matthew's Golden Jubilee



GOLDEN YEAR (clockwise from top right) Fr. Pascal Kis-Horvath and Fr. Matthew Kovacs concelebrated their golden ordination Mass with Abbot Denis on August 12, 2007. Fr. Matthew enjoys the reception after the Mass with Collin Naharajah '13. Fr. Pascal visits with Mrs. Raymond Thomasson and Mrs. Louis Johnston at the reception. Frs. Pascal and Matthew at their ordination at the Cistercian Monastery in Zwettl, Austria, on August 12, 1957. Historical photo courtesy of the abbey; contemporary photos by Jim Reich