

Cistercian Spirituality: An Overview

by: Fr. Abbot Denis Farkasfalvy

The monastic movement which produced the Cistercian Order was marked by a quest for spiritual renewal that would transform the spiritual landscape of the Middle Ages in the West and that continues to exercise deep influence in our times.

The documents left behind by the Founders of Cîteaux, the first Cistercian Monastery, convey a deep desire for authenticity - the recovery of the unadulterated faith and ideals of the apostolic church. They aimed for the purity of the Rule of St. Benedict, returning to an ascetic ideal more in tune with the inspiration of early monasticism and less prone to compromise with feudal society. It emphasizes simplicity of life and a balance between work and prayer in opposition to the lifestyle of the Benedictines of Cluny (one of the most powerful Benedictine Abbeys at the time), who could get caught up in lengthy liturgical practices.

The search for authenticity sent these early Cistercians back to the two great sources of theology and spirituality: the Bible and the Church Fathers.

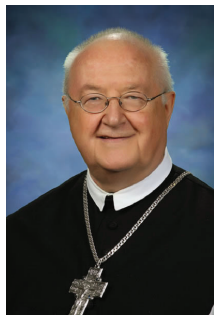
The first Cistercian generation attracted a host of bright and educated men who in the monastery continued their intellectual life, now in the service of their vocation. The towering figure of Cistercian spirituality was St. Bernard of Clairvaux, who exercised immense influence on the whole 12th century "as a monk leading the western world" (Daniel-Rops).

His older friend William of St. Thierry excelled in a more philosophical vein of spiritual theology, connecting Bernard with the intellectual movement of the French universities (today called "early scholasticism").

With his sermons and treatises the English abbot Saint Aelred, abbot of Rievaulx, was one of Bernard's most successful disciples, spreading his spiritual doctrine in monasteries throughout the British Isles.

Emphasis in this spirituality lay on both Christology and anthropology. On the one hand, with their close attention to the "mysteries of Christ" (the salvific events of Jesus' life on earth), the Cistercians greatly contributed to the medieval devotion to Christ's humanity and the flourishing of Marian devotion. On the other hand, relying on a

tradition rooted in the thought of St. Augustine, they underlined the importance of self-knowledge: the discovery that truth about the self is the only path leading to knowing the truth of God. Cistercian spirituality thus follows the Benedictine Rule by laying out the steps of humility, but defines itself as a "school of love" (*schola caritatis*) in which one must grow a three-pronged approach to love of the self, of the neighbor and of God.



Abbot Denis

The theological and spiritual legacy of St. Bernard remained popular throughout the centuries and was heavily used by theologians as diverse as Thomas Aquinas, the reformers Luther and Calvin, Blaise Pascal and Hans Urs von Balthasar.

As a happy surprise there appeared the unusual familiarity of Pope Benedict XVI with the theology of St. Bernard, whom he quotes or speaks about with predilection.

SAMUEL: VOCATIONAL MODEL

by: Fr. Ignatius Peacher

There are many vocation stories in the Bible: Abraham and Moses in the Old Testament and Peter and Paul in the New Testament, just to name a few. Each was called by God in a different way. We can learn from these stories about discernment and apply the lessons to our own life.



Fr. Ignatius

Consider the prophet Samuel. His vocation story is in 1 Samuel 3. He is a youth when God calls him. However, Samuel mistakenly goes to his teacher, Eli, thinking it is he who calls. Three times Samuel is awakened by someone calling him. The third time this happens Eli understands that it is the Lord that is calling Samuel. Therefore he tells Samuel that the next time it happens he ought to say, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening." The fourth time Samuel is called he repeats the words Eli gives him and finally receives a message from God.

There are times when God calls a young person to a vocation, but the young person is confused and doesn't understand what God is calling him to do. It is important to note that Samuel comprehends God's message only because Eli, the old man, helped him and guided him. Young people still need guidance from their elders.

The discernment process does not depend solely on the young person discerning. Laity, i.e. mom and dad or aunt and uncle or friend, can help a young person discerning with a suggestion or an attitude in favor of religious vocations. Perhaps one reason there has been a decrease in religious vocations in recent decades is that very few adults have considered religious life as a real and excellent possibility to recommend to young people as something worthy of giving one's life to.



Samuel with Eli

If you are discerning a religious vocation and would like to discuss your calling with Fr. Ignatius, Vocations Director, he can be reached at fr-ignatius@cistercian.org

Abbey Church Services

UPCOMING EVENTS

Christmas Eve Vigil Mass
Dec. 24th 11:30 pm

Christmas Morning Mass
Dec. 25th 9:00 am

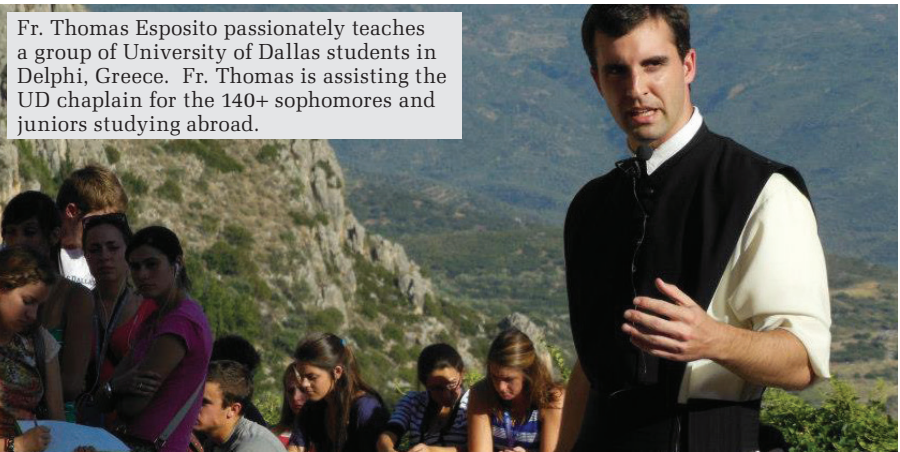
New Years Eve Adoration
Dec. 31st 9:00 pm-12:00 am

DAILY SCHEDULE

Office of Readings & Morning Prayer 6 am
Evening Prayer 6 pm

Daily Mass (Mon - Sat.) 6:30 am
Mass on Sunday 9 am
First Friday Mass 7:30 pm

The Collegium Cantorum will join us for Mass on the First Friday of every month during the school year.



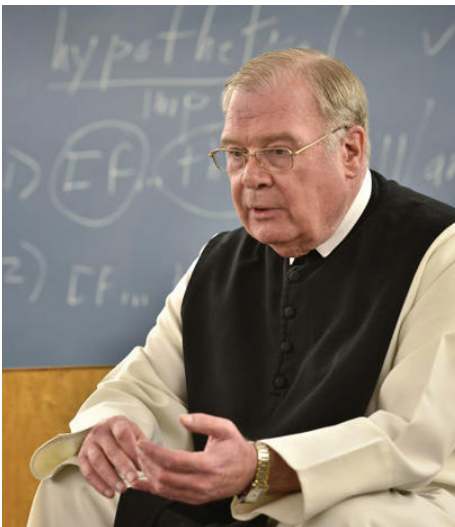
Fr. Thomas Esposito passionately teaches a group of University of Dallas students in Delphi, Greece. Fr. Thomas is assisting the UD chaplain for the 140+ sophomores and juniors studying abroad.

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

Cistercian Fathers make a difference at Univ. of Dallas

by: Fr. Joseph Van House

Less than a mile south of the Abbey lies the campus of the University of Dallas. Founded just two years before the Abbey was built, UD is one of the most vigorously Catholic and intellectually lively small universities in the country, bearing an influence on both the Church and on academia that far outweighs its size.



The Cistercian fathers have been teaching and ministering there for over 5 decades, and have long been happy to contribute their own gifts to serve God through the university.

THE ELDER STATESMEN: Fr. David (now retired), Fr. Roch and Fr. Abbot Denis have not only served in the theology department almost since its beginning but have largely formed the curriculum and the staff.

THE MAINSTAYS: Between the two of them, Fr. James and Fr. Robert have given more than 60 years of full-time service as professors in their respective departments (Fr. James in philosophy, Fr. Robert in English); both have long been known as key leaders in the life of the University, teaching and ministering to countless students.

A FOOT IN THE DOOR: Fr. Thomas is in his second year serving as an assistant chaplain to the UD Rome campus while he pursues his studies



Fr. Robert Maguire speaks with a group of UD students on the Mall on the Irving Campus. The Cistercian monks have heard confessions, said mass and prayed with students for decades.

at the Biblical Institute; Fr. Joseph has recently begun serving as an adjunct professor of theology. Fr. Ignatius assists the chaplain at the Irving Campus



A LETTER FROM THE ABBEY

December 2012



Briefly

Monastic Memories
Monks remember their fondest Christmas stories. See p. 2

Letter from the Abbot
Fr. Abbot Peter comments on hope during the Advent Season. See p. 2.

School of Love
Abbot Emeritus Fr. Denis starts his "Spirituality School" series with an overview of Cistercian Spirituality. See p. 5.

Model of Discernment
Fr. Ignatius Peacher, the Vocation Director, reflects on the call of Samuel as a model for vocational discernment. See p. 5



Singing for the Pope
Br. John, while studying in Rome, proclaimed the gospel this past month at the Consistory - the Rite of installing new Cardinals - at St. Peter's Basilica.



LET US REJOICE & BE GLAD

Four Members of the Abbey are Ordained

by: Br. John Bayer

This summer Our Lady of Dallas was again blessed. On Sunday, August 19th Br. Anthony Bigney and Br. John Bayer made their solemn profession to the Cistercian Order. On the very next day both young men were ordained deacons by Bishop Kevin Farrell of the Diocese of Dallas.

Only a few weeks later, on September 8th Br. Stephen Gregg and Br. Lawrence Brophy were ordained priests, also by Bishop Farrell. Fr. Lawrence celebrated his First Mass the following day, Sunday, September 9th, while Fr. Stephen celebrated his First Mass on Sunday, September 16th. Large crowds attended all the events, filling the church and manifesting how joyful and grateful the Cistercian community is to see the "young monks" of the Abbey living their vocations.

For Br. Anthony the presence of so many students from the Prep School was a true inspiration: "Seeing the large number of my students and their families present at the Mass was wonderful. The support of the school community has been overwhelming, and I look forward to dedicating my life to teaching and ministering to them." This year will see Br. Anthony teaching at the Prep School in a variety of ways, most significantly as a religion teacher

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SOLEMNLY PROFESSED
Br. Anthony reads his hand-written vows before signing them on the altar.

From the Abbot's Desk

LEARNING TO HOPE

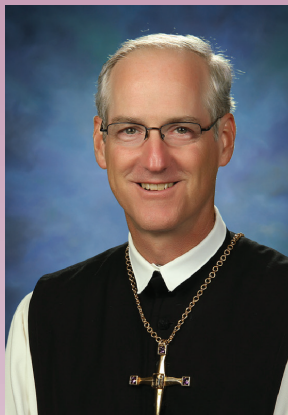
Advent should teach us to hope, to hope big and to hope honestly. We are good at hoping for the little things, some of which may not be all that little. We hope for a new toy (regardless of our age), for success, for health, for fulfilling relationships. But even when we hope for health or for love, we are limiting our hopes to this life and to this world. We are not hoping big enough.

And we often fail to be fully honest in our hopes, thinking that something or someone here in this world will satisfy our hopes. A parent or a friend might provide that new "toy," and our hard work or our wonderful personality win us the success we want, but if we listen to our hearts, we learn that no thing and no one in this world can fully satisfy our hopes.

During Advent we begin our evening prayer with the Latin hymn "Conditor Alme Siderum" (Loving Creator of the Stars). The poet addresses Christ as the God of Light, shining into the growing darkness of the world: *vergente mundi vespere*, as he says in the second stanza, the world's own evening descending upon us. We do not know who composed the hymn, but the 7th-century poet is attuned to the seasons. He knows that the days are lengthening, that darkness seems to be overtaking the earth – the darkness not just of longer nights but also of the physical struggles to survive in a cold, damp world in which the food on one's table comes from the work of one's hands and the blessings of favorable weather. The poet is also a man of faith: he knows the so much more profound and disheartening darkness that is the physical evil of natural catastrophes and human illness, and he knows the pain of moral evil, of sin. In the growing darkness of winter, he sings out to a loving God who created the stars: *aeterna lux credentium, Christe, redemptor omnium* (Christ, the eternal light of those who believe, the redeemer of all).

Advent teaches us to acknowledge that evening is falling around us, and to hope. To hope not just for the new "toy," but to hope for redemption of all – of all of us, of all things, of all this world.

Please accept the wishes and prayers for Advent and for Christmas from the whole Cistercian Monastery. We pray that you grow in hope this Advent Season and that Christ, the Redeemer of All, visit each one of you even in the midst of the year's longest night on Christmas morning.



Fr. Abbot Peter Verhalen



MONASTIC MEMORIES

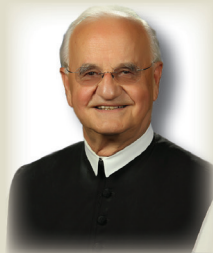
Dearest Christmas



Fr. Bede Lackner



Fr. Philip Lastimoso



Fr. Bernard Marton



Fr. Paul McCormick



Fr. Gregory Schweers

FR. BEDE LACKNER
At 85 I no longer have particular details, only general impressions: Midnight Mass, Silent Night, Christmas tree, surprise presents at home and going to my baptismal sponsor with Christmas wishes and receiving gifts. These always included oranges (imported, from Italy), extremely rare at the time.

FR. PHILIP LASTIMOSA
For Christmas 1992, my family went to Paris. We stayed at Le Maurice and went to Euro Disney.

FR. BERNARD MARTON
The year was 1946. I always loved airplanes and wanted to have a toy plane. I also loved my older sister, 10 years my senior, who had very little time to spend with me. Christmas Eve rolled around and my mother convinced her to take me for a long stroll. We set out on a very pleasant journey where we talked, composed ditties and sang them unashamedly. The time spent together was priceless. And the present waiting for me under the tiny Christmas tree was a small wooden model of a fantastic DC-3 airplane—just like the ones we saw flying over us that we knew were not bombers!

FR. PAUL MCCORMICK
My most poignant (and I suppose dearest, though not in the expected way) memory was leaving the monastery after our Christmas party to visit Fr. Damian in the hospital. He was non-responsive, but the nurse assured me that he was still able to hear. I played for him a tape of the music he had composed and recorded himself, entitled "The Resurrection." I could soon see him moving his toes in sync with the music. It was announced the next day before choir that he had passed earlier that morning.

FR. GREGORY SCHWEERS
I celebrated my most memorable Christmas (and my 25th birthday) in a snow-covered abbey called Casamari in Italy, where I was lodged in the Forno Vecchio (Old Oven) in sub-zero cold. I was so 'on ice' for the Xmas midnight Mass that I had a personal revelation about what being born "Away in a Manger" really meant: holy, frigid suffering!

ORDINATION & SOLEMN VOWS



Br. John, wearing the Cistercian cuculla, recently took his Solemn Vows

the rite of ordination, he was moved when the bishop placed into his hands the book of the Gospels: "That point in the rite makes me think about how the Gospel is something 'handed on' through the ministry of the Church; and how, as an ordained minister of the Church, I am now expected to read, believe, and preach—to 'hand on' faithfully — that Gospel."

Fr. Stephen, now finished with his program in patristic theology at the Augustinian University in Rome, will begin working towards a doctorate in English literature at the University of Dallas, in addition to teaching Church history and elementary Latin in the Prep School. His return to Dallas is a blessing for many at the School, especially those who remember him as a Cistercian student and rejoice now to see how the blessings of God have worked in his life.

Both Fr. Stephen

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and the advisor for the yearbook. In addition he will begin graduate studies in history and government. He will also begin preaching the Gospel and delivering homilies, both for the Abbey's Sunday Mass and for the various classes at the school.

This year Br. John journeyed to Rome to study theology and philosophy at the Gregorian University. As a newly minted deacon, he has already had the opportunity to preach in a variety of venues, most recently for the students of the University of Dallas Rome campus at the "Basilica di Tre Fontane" on the Feast of All Saints. Br. John both looks forward to preaching as a deacon and, at the same time, feels the responsibility that comes with such a solemn task. During

SCENES FROM THE ORDINATION



SIGN OF PEACE The newly ordained Fr. Stephen Gregg exchanges the sign of peace with Bishop Kevin Farrell.



"I think we long knew that God expected us to be priests, even if we did not know why. IT ALL STILL SURPRISES ME. I thank God he let us take up the task with joy!"
— Fr. Stephen Gregg

and Fr. Lawrence will join the rest of the priests at the Abbey in celebrating Mass and hearing confessions at the School and at local parishes in the diocese.

For Fr. Lawrence his ordination carried a sense of completion and a renewed sense of belonging to the community: "While Stephen and I were kneeling and Bishop Farrell was concluding the Ordination prayer, I remember thinking, 'Wow, I'm a priest.' It was hard to believe that after all the years of discernment and formation and struggle in a brief, quiet moment we were ordained priests and were entering into a new way of life. It was very moving to exchange the sign of peace with all the other priests in the community, from those younger than I to elderly fathers who could barely walk. It was like joining the community all over again."

Fr. Lawrence reached another major goal this summer: he passed his qualifying exam in the doctoral program in mathematics at the University of North Texas. In addition to celebrating Mass for the freshman class in the Prep School and assisting in parishes, Fr. Lawrence will continue his full-time pursuit of a Ph.D. in mathematics.

Please join the Cistercian community in celebrating these young vocations to Our Lady of Dallas, praying that they might faithfully and fruitfully exercise the ministry to which God has called them!



LIKE AN OLD FRIEND Bishop Kevin Farrell speaks warmly after the Diaconal Ordination on August 20th. Bishop Farrell has ordained 10 young Cistercian monks over the past few years.



HOME IMPROVEMENTS

Things have changed around the Abbey recently



With more "brothers" becoming "fathers" the abbey needed new readers at Sunday mass. Upperclassmen from the Prep School, as well as students from UD have been reading each Sunday morning.



Every worshiper who parks in the front parking lot is sure to notice the new wooden screen which runs in front of the west wing.



The morning breakfast routine has become far more pleasant after a remodeling project expanded the area and added this hi-tech coffee machine.



Monks are able to exercise more frequently and conveniently after converting an old storage area into a home gym.