

December 2005



A Letter from the Abbey

Cistercian Abbey • Our Lady of Dallas



Briefly

Fr. Bernard says masses in French at St. Monica's

One Saturday each month, Fr. Bernard Marton welcomes his 60 to 80 "parishioners" with a Hungarian-accented *Le Seigneur soit avec vous* greeting at St. Monica's Eucharistic Chapel.

The enthusiastic support for these French masses is trumpeted by their genuine *et avec votre esprit* response.

Under the direction of Dr. Philippe Zimmern (father of two current Cistercian Prep students), a small *schola* leads the faithful in singing. They often are accompanied by various members on the piano, saxophone, or even the violin.

"After the Mass," added Fr. Bernard, "attendees gather in the Parish Hall and exchange greetings and the latest European gossip from sources available only to those who understand this enchanting language."

Everyone (even those not fluent in French) is invited. Some French students at Cistercian have already taken advantage of this opportunity.

The next few months' schedule includes services on January 28, March 4, April 8, May 6. *Soyez les bienvenus!*

Christmas & Easter at the Abbey Church

Christmas Services

- Office of Readings and Midnight Mass 11:30 pm
- Christmas Day Mass 9 am

Holy Week Services

- Holy Thursday 5:30 pm
- Good Friday 5:30 pm
- Easter Vigil 11:30 pm
- Easter Sunday Mass 9 am

The Collegium will again sing for us throughout the Easter Triduum.



No Christmas without Mary

Reflections on ancient and contemporary Marial texts

By Abbot Denis Farkasfalvy

MARY IS RARELY LEFT OUT OF THE NATIVITY SCENE, but in recent decades, her role in our salvation has been minimized in preaching and in theology, even among Catholics. Christmas reminds us that Mary's role is essential, despite an increasing emphasis on ecclesiology and ecumenism, and all sorts of attempts to transform Christology in the various branches of Christianity.

In his timely book *The Mary Hypothesis*, Vittorio Messori (author of *The Ratzinger Report*, 1984 and *Crossing of the Threshold of Hope*, 1994) brings world-wide attention to this subject. While recognizing that a certain kind of Mariology can become stale and formalistic as it dwells on the personal privileges and titles of Mary, Messori claims that recent times have shown how Marian devotion functions as a litmus test. He suggests that Mary serves as a balance between two extremes in Catholic theology — a reductionist Christology understating the Lord's divinity (following in the footsteps of the ancient heresy called "Nestorianism") and a view that concentrates on Christ's divine nature at

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Christmas reminds us of Mary's importance

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the expense of his humanity (a heresy traditionally called "Monophysitism").

"Mariology is, in fact, Christology," Messori summarizes. "Her dogmas are but the confirmation and bulwark of her Son's. Whenever Mary has been neglected, sooner or later Christ has also disappeared."

The marial message of Christmas surfaces in ancient, classical texts as well as a few that are contemporary.

First Text

St. Justin the Martyr on Mary

After the New Testament, this text by Justin may be the oldest theological reflection on Mary's role in the history of our salvation.

"He [the Son of God] became man by the Virgin, in order that the disobedience which proceeded from the serpent might receive its destruction in the same manner in which it derived its origin. For Eve, who was a virgin and undefiled, having conceived the word of the serpent, brought forth disobedience and death. But the Virgin Mary received faith and joy, when the angel Gabriel announced the good tidings to her that the Spirit of the Lord would come upon her, and the power of the Highest would overshadow her: wherefore also 'the Holy Thing begotten of her' (cf. Lk 1:36) is the Son of God; and she replied, 'Be it unto me according to thy word.' (Lk 1:38) And by her has He been born, to whom we have proved so many Scriptures refer, and by whom God destroys both the serpent and those [fallen] angels and men who are like the serpent; but works deliverance from death to those who repent of their wickedness and believe in Him."

What makes this text extraordinary is the clarity of vision by which it shows the link between the story of Adam and Eve and the Annunciation. Two images are evoked: Satan whispering into Eve's ears and the angel Gabriel speaking to Mary. Both are virgins. That suggests two fresh beginnings. Just as St. Paul speaks of a first and second Adam, Justin's text implies a first and second Eve. By Mary's prompt obedience to the angel's word, the harm caused by Eve, who followed Satan's suggestion with her disobedience, is repaired. The text is so crisp and compact that one must think that this Eve/Mary parallel was a known and accepted teaching in Justin's time (he died in 161 A.D.). In fact, our second text, written a generation later, gives the impression that Justin's thoughts have been well absorbed by the early church.

Second Text

St. Irenaeus of Lyons' Comments on Mary's Virginity

"And just as through a disobedient virgin man was stricken down and fell into death, so through the Virgin who was obedient to the Word of God man was reanimated and received life. For the Lord came to seek again the sheep that was lost; For it was necessary that Adam be summed up in Christ, so that mortality might be swallowed up and overwhelmed by immortality. And Eve was summed up in Mary, so that a virgin should be a virgin's interces-

sor, and by a virgin's obedience undo and put away the disobedience of a virgin."

This text is part of a short work by Irenaeus, his *Demonstration of the Apostolic Faith*, which was believed for centuries to be lost. It surfaced in an ancient Armenian translation and was recognized once again as part of the heritage of the Church Fathers. Irenaeus consciously expands the parallelism of Eve/Mary by the parallelism of Adam/Christ, repeatedly used by St. Paul. Irenaeus thinks that the work of our salvation proceeds by "summing up" or "going back to" or "recapitulating" all that had previously gone wrong. This recapitulation takes place under the guidance of the Holy Spirit who has made a second beginning possible in which Mary's virginal motherhood and YES to the angel played a pivotal role.

Third Text

St. Ambrose of Milan's Comments on the Magnificat

The author of the text quoted above, Irenaeus, was a bishop in the Western half of the Roman Empire (Lyons, France), but he led a Greek-speaking community of immigrants, and thus he spoke and wrote in Greek. The founder of Mariology in the West was St.

Ambrose, the bishop of Milan (374 to 397). Ambrose's greatest convert was St. Augustine, who was teaching rhetoric in Milan at that time. Ambrose eventually baptized Augustine. The following is an excerpt from a sermon by Ambrose on the Visitation:

"Let Mary's soul be in each of you to proclaim the greatness of the Lord. Let her spirit be in each to rejoice in the Lord. Christ has only one mother in the flesh, but we all bring forth Christ in faith. Every soul receives the Word of God if only it keeps chaste, remaining pure and free from sin, its modesty undefiled. The soul that succeeds in this proclaims the greatness of the Lord, just as Mary's soul did

by magnifying the Lord as her spirit rejoiced in God her Savior. As we read elsewhere: Magnify the Lord with me. The Lord is magnified, not because the human voice can add anything to God but because he is magnified within us. Christ is the image of God, and if the soul does what is right and holy, it magnifies that image of God, in whose likeness it was created and, in magnifying the image of God, the soul has a share in its greatness and is exalted."

Fourth Text

Pope Benedict XVI on Mary

In a surprisingly novel way Cardinal Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI) elaborated on the ancient parallelisms between Eve and Mary in his booklet on Mary entitled *Daughter of Zion*.

"The way human life is, implanted as it is in a world where death is the condition of life, birth is always ambivalent, simultaneously a dying and a becoming.

"The words of judgment in Genesis 3:16 describe exactly this fate of man, and the ambiguity of the figure of Eve expresses the ambiguity of biological becoming: birth is part of death, it happens under the sign of death ... Now if Mary is really the one giving birth to God, if she really bears him who is the death of death and life in the full sense of the word, then this being the Mother of God is new birth – *nova nativitas* – a new birth inserted into the old way, just as Mary is the New Covenant in the midst of the Old Covenant."

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– Pope Benedict XVI

Meeting of Cistercians reveals progress, hope

For the first two weeks of September Fr. Abbot and Fr. Peter attended the General Chapter of the Cistercian Order. Every five years abbots, abbesses, and delegates from all the Cistercian communities around the world gather to discuss topics of concern for the whole order, elect officials, and adopt legislation or texts of interest to all Cistercians.

This year more than 125 Cistercian monks and nuns gathered at the Salesianum, a large convention center an hour outside Rome that is maintained by the Salesian Order. Tall Roman umbrella pines line the drive around the center, which looks out

on rolling hills of olive and fruit trees. The setting was quiet and picturesque, a wonderful spot for a retreat. The meeting hall is equipped with the technology to handle PowerPoint presentations and simultaneous translations. Cistercian monks and nuns as well as professional translators hired for the occasion provided translations in the most commonly used languages: German, Italian, Spanish, French, Vietnamese, and Polish. Each day began with Mass celebrated in Latin with Gregorian Chant sung beautifully by the assembled nuns and monks.

A monk from the Cistercian monastery in Quebec and the newly elected abbess from Mariastern-Gwigen in Austria alternated at the organ, while the abbess from Wurmsbach in Germany, a former music teacher, played the Renaissance recorder. The readings were in a different modern language each day, the rest of the Mass in Latin. Breakfast followed and then meetings for most of the day.

On the Opening Day of the General Chapter, the entire group of Cistercians piled into large tour buses for a visit to the Cistercian Generalate and for a papal audience. At the Generalate some 25 young Cistercian monks and nuns received us and served the meal. These young Cistercians were in Rome for a series of courses on Cistercian history and spirituality. At the papal audience in front of St. Peter's, the piazza was also filled with young people who had gathered to listen to Pope Benedict XVI. Special seats quite close to the Pope were reserved for the Cistercians and a few other groups. Pope Benedict generated a joyous atmosphere much as his predecessor had.

The rest of two weeks were filled with "business meetings." The Abbot Presidents of the various congregations (groups of monasteries) reported on the status of the monasteries in their care. Through accompanying PowerPoint presentations everyone was

able to see what the monasteries in Vietnam or Brazil looked like. It also became clear that the vocation crisis seems to be abating. Though some monasteries are literally dying out and closing their doors, others are thriving. Not only in Vietnam and Ethiopia but also in certain convents and monasteries, such as Boulaur in southern France or Heiligenkreuz in Austria where young monks and nuns are taking up religious life as Cistercians.

Several general interest presentations also covered topics from a study of the scriptural basis for religious life to a sociologist's understanding of the inner dynamics of a monastery. Among its most important deliberations the General Chapter re-elected for the next 5 years Abbot General Mauro Esteva, from Spain.

As it is with most meetings, the real value of the Chapter lay beyond the juridical necessities of reports and elections. Through informal conversations during and after meals and meetings, the delegates, young and old, shared stories and experiences and hopes for the future.



SPECIAL SEATING 125 Cistercians begin to take their seats in preparation for their Papal Audience.



MADE IN THE SHADE A Brazilian Cistercian monk helps a few Cistercian nuns stay cool in St. Peter's Square prior to their Papal audience.

Abbey Church Services

**Office of Readings
and Morning Prayer** 6 am

**Daily Mass Monday
through Saturday** 6:30 am

Mass on Sunday 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, February through May.

Christmas and Holy Week

For the schedule of special services, please see page one.

Cistercian Abbey Our Lady of Dallas
3550 Cistercian Rd.
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Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from the Cistercian Fathers

This community picture, the first in 30 years, was taken on Thanksgiving, 2005. Only Fr. Aloysius was unable to attend.

Top row (left to right): Fr. Paul McCormick, Fr. Mark Ripperger, Fr. Robert Maguire, Fr. Peter Verhalen, Fr. Bernard Marton, Fr. Julius Leloczky, Fr. James Lehrberger, Fr. Gregory Schweers.

Middle row (left to right): Fr. Roch Kereszty, Fr. Matthew Kovacs, Fr. Bede Lackner, Fr. Benedict Monostori, Abbot Denis Farkasfalvy, Fr. Ralph March, Fr. Pascal Kis-Horvath, Fr. David Balas, Fr. Melchior Chladek.

Bottom row (left to right): Br. Abraham Frei, Br. Augustine Hoelke, Br. Thomas Esposito, Br. Ignatius Peacher, Br. Michael Strong, Br. Philip Lastimosa, and Br. Joseph Van House.

In front, Fr. Henry Marton. (Not pictured: Fr. Aloysius Kimecz)