



A Letter from the Abbey

Cistercian Abbey • Our Lady of Dallas

Briefly

Recruitment activities include Eucharist adoration

In the life of the Abbey our highest agenda continues to be the recruitment and formation of the next Cistercian generation.

This year again for December 29-31 we expect a group of young men interested in the Abbey to share the monastery's life in the last three days of the calendar year.

As usual, the year will end with a three-hour Eucharistic adoration on December 31, from 9 pm until Midnight.

While much of the abbey's program is focused on the young, the ten young men currently in formation are intent on their many chores and tasks.

The contribute immensely to the important task of caring for our elderly and sick members.

The brothers help make the daily life of our elderly more pleasant by providing food services, transportation, physical help of all sorts by working in the church, the sacristy, the refectory and in sick rooms, as well as by running errands and helping with the upkeep of our home.

Special services

Christmas Eve Midnight Service

Office of Readings begins at 11:30 pm and is followed immediately by the Midnight Mass.

Christmas Day Service

9 am, concelebrated High Mass.

New Years Eve

Eucharistic Adoration 9 pm -12 midnight with benediction at midnight.

Holy Week Services

Both on Holy Thursday (April 5) and Good Friday (April 6) the services begin at 5:30 pm. The Easter Vigil begins on Holy Saturday, April 7 at 11 PM.

On Easter Sunday, April 8, there will be a concelebrated High Mass at 9 AM.

A season of beginnings

"In vain was He born in Bethlehem, unless He is born in our hearts"

by Abbot Denis Farkasfalvy

This season is about beginning. Our calendars and customs speak of three beginnings of a new year: the first Sunday of Advent begins a new liturgical year; the Octave or eighth day after Christmas opens a new year of the calendar; between them shines the great feast of Christmas with its statement of faith about a new birth.

In our Christmas texts, we do not sim-

ply recall an event long past, but proclaim a "new birth" (nova nativitas). We announce a new light originating from the coming of Christ, and we even herald a "new coming" – a new arrival of the incarnate God in a world immersed in constant change.

In one of his sermons preached at Christmas to his monks in the chapter room of Clairvaux, St. Bernard begins with the

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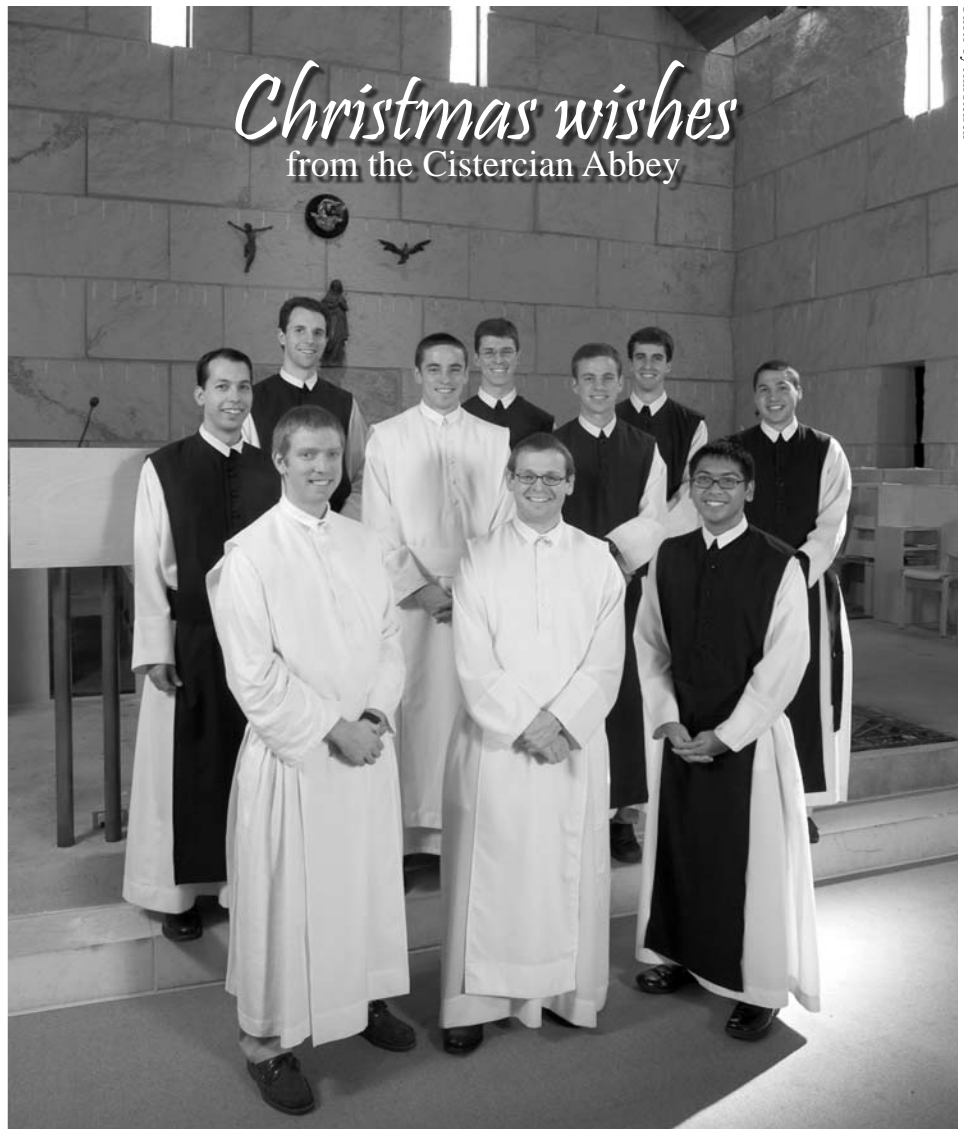


Photo by Jim Reisch

Memories of the 1956 revolution recalled

In the past few years, silver and golden anniversaries began to emerge one after the other in unending supply.

This year, two silver anniversaries were marked in the spring: Fr. Gregory and Fr. Peter's ordination to the priesthood. In the fall, two curiously antithetical "Golden Anniversaries" came to the fore.

On October 23, the fiftieth anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 was commemorated and celebrated worldwide.

Many readers of this newsletter will have the opportunity to read a story on the events of 1956 in the December 2006 edition of *The Continuum* (the Cistercian Prep School alumni magazine).

It presents the personal reminiscences of those members of the Abbey who lived through the tumultuous events of that time and eventually, in consequence of those events, ended up in this monastery thereafter.

On October 22, the Hungarian community of the Dallas Metropolitan area gathered in the Abbey Church for a mass in Hungarian and erected a modest monument on our property in commemoration of the Hungarian roots of the monastery.

On November 5, students, alumni and their families gathered in the School's theater to view a documentary produced in the 1960's by CBS News and narrated by Walter Cronkite.



The destruction and violence of the Hungary Revolution of 1956 still resonate for those monks who lived through it.

The film was recently obtained in DVD format and our photography teacher successfully extracted from it a few frames on which Abbot Denis is seen participating in the student demonstrations on the day the revolution broke out in Budapest 50 years ago.

This documentary is still the only known

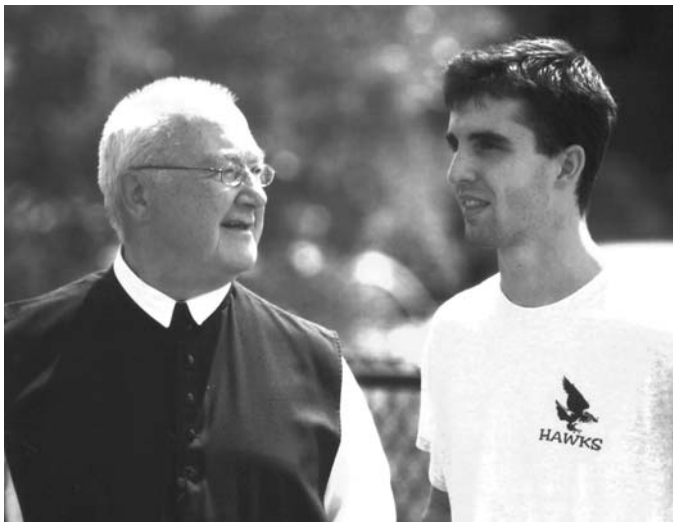
authentic visual documentation of those events.

Interestingly, this fall marks also the fiftieth anniversary of the deed by which the original 34-acre tract of land was given to the Cistercians for building their monastery, next to which the Cistercian Preparatory School was eventually built.

Forming the novices and junior monks

While most continue to take classes, two have begun teaching at the prep school

Photo by Meg Squiers



Abbot Denis with Br. Thomas at the Cistercian Prep Volleyball tournament in September. The monastery's team of young monks took home the first place trophy.

A new step in the formation of our young Cistercians took place this year: Brs. Abraham and Joseph took over teaching the religion courses in Forms IV (grade 8) and III (grade 7) respectively.

At the same time Brs. Augustine and Ambrose participated in leading the annual retreats for Forms V and VI.

In the spring, the brothers will again help prepare Form IV for confirmation.

The main task of the junior brothers (the ones in black and white) is their graduate education in philosophy and theology.

In Spring 2007 Brs. Abra-

ham and Joseph will obtain their master's degrees in theology; they then plan to spend two more years in theology studies, but in Rome, where they will obtain their licentiate from the Pontifical University "Gregoriana."

The novices (the ones in all white) take all their classes in the monastery.

The "faculty" of the novitiate includes the Abbot (Psalms), Fr. Peter (Rule of St. Benedict), Fr. Roch (Spiritual Theology, Cistercian Spirituality, and Liturgy), Fr. Julius (Cistercian History), Fr. Bernard (Gregorian Chant and Latin), and Fr. Paul (weekly spiritual conferences).

Ancient texts reveal the mystery of Christmas

December 25

“**T**HERE IS NO PLACE FOR mourning on the birthday of Life itself who has swallowed up mortality with all its fear, and brought us the joyful promise of life eternal.

Let the saint rejoice for the reward so to be received. Let the sinner give thanks, for he is offered forgiveness. Let the pagan take courage, for he is called unto life.”

— Pope St. Leo the Great

December 26

“**I** KNOW A VIRGIN BORE A SON today; I believe that God begot his Son before time began. The manner in which each happened I do not understand but venerate in silence.”

— St. John Chrysostom

December 27

“**G**OD THE FATHER DROPPED down to earth a purse full of his mercy, a purse that burst open upon the cross as it poured out its hidden content, the price of our redemption.

The purse dropped down was small but very full. For unto us a child was given but in it the fullness of Godhead dwelt among us.”

— St. Bernard of Clairvaux

December 28

“**H**E WHO IS IN THE BOSOM of the Father is also in the womb of the Virgin. He who lies in the arms of his Mother also walks on the wings of the winds. On high he is adored by angels; here below he eats with tax collectors.”

— St. Proclus of Constantinople

December 29

“**A**ND THE WORD WAS MADE flesh and dwelt among us. One can almost hear him saying to

A season of beginnings

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remark that the medieval monastic liturgy proclaims the feast of Christmas not in the past tense but in the present: “In Bethlehem of Judea Jesus Christ is born” – not ‘was born’. This is ancient tradition. Origen, the great Christian biblical scholar of the 3rd century, made a statement that should be printed on every Christmas card:

“In vain was He born in Bethlehem, unless He is born in our hearts.”

“God was made man.” This statement must never be reduced to something ‘déjà vu,’ because it means that our human potential has been expanded beyond limitation.

Each person can explore the possibilities of a new birth: his own poten-

tial for a new beginning at which he leaves behind his most stubborn faults and sins, repairs his most hopeless relationships, refreshes his outlook, and initiates a new approach to reforming his life.

Each person can explore the possibilities of a new birth: his own potential for a new beginning

The Book of Isaiah, which many Christians read in Advent, closes its opening passage with this sense of a new beginning almost like a program of renewal: “Put away your misdeeds from my sight; stop doing evil, learn to do good; make

justice your goal: redress the wronged, hear the orphan’s plea, defend the widow. Come now, let us set things right...” (Is 1:16-18).

The incarnate Lord walks before us, leading us into the unfolding newness of future time.

the human race: “You must not give up hope of the possibility of becoming God’s children because the Son of God himself, the very Word of God, has been made flesh and dwelt among us. In return, become spiritual yourselves and dwell in him who became flesh and dwelt among us.”

— St. Augustine

December 30

“**W**HAT IS MORE amazing is that Christ continues to be born to us today. Daily he allows himself to be brought forth by every believing soul. What virginity accomplished in the mother of the Lord when she gave birth, a conscience purified and adorned by merits accomplishes in our inmost being ... The Apostle explains how he can be a mother of spiritual children when he

states: ‘My little children I suffer birth pangs with you again until Christ is formed in you.’”

— St. Sedatus of Béziers

December 31

“**O**UT OF LOVE FOR US THE Word of God, born once for all in the flesh, wills continually to be born in a spiritual way in those who desire him. Becoming a little child, he fashions himself in them by their virtues and gives them as much knowledge as he knows them to be capable of receiving. The holy Apostle declares: ‘Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever.’ For the Apostle knows that the mystery is always fresh and new, and that our understanding of it never diminishes its freshness.

— Saint Maximus the Confessor

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 February through May (not January).

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“Shepherds and wise men gathered around the crèche”

Our senior-most fathers bless us with their ever-growing trust in God’s power and wisdom

By Br. Joseph Van House

It is natural that at Christmas and Advent our thoughts should bend towards the joy and hope hidden in children: after all, Christ, the Savior, is born, and in him “those who walked in darkness have seen a great light.”

The Christ-child captures our attention because he bears the promise of a kingdom of eternal peace,

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and also because, by coming in the form of a newborn who cries out for our care and preparation, he actually involves us in building it.

His humility gives our lives meaning and joy, as well as hope.

Cistercian Abbey now has four octogenarian monks, and eight in their seventies.

For all of the gladness and light

that comes into Cistercian through God’s gift of students and new monks, we also know that responding to the promise of Christmas involves much more than “investing in the future” by devoting ourselves

to the young.

A culture of life in Christ cherishes especially those who walk ahead of us on their way to the final encounter with the Lord. Christmas is a time for family in the broadest sense, and a most fitting occasion to honor those among us who have already spent a lifetime “preparing the way of the Lord, making straight his paths.”

Our aged may feel like the tired shepherds gathering around the manger, but the rest of us see in them also the “wise men” who have traveled the longest and know most about seeking and finding.

This might be true in every family but it is especially true at the Abbey.

This Christmas, God invites us to rejoice both in the innumerable countless blessings that have been given through our senior-most fathers in the past, as well as in the gift of who they are today, including their witness to endurance of trials and to ever-growing trust in God’s power and wisdom.

Especially during Christmas and Advent, please join us in prayers of gratitude and intercession for our elderly confreres.

They themselves are the greatest jewels that the Abbey has to offer for Christ’s crown when he comes.



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