



December 2013

# A LETTER FROM THE ABBEY



## Briefly

### Cistercian Spirituality

Fr. Denis discusses St. Bernard's call to go to Bethlehem  
See p. 2

### Br. Justin Renews

See photos of Br. Justin renewing his vows and mark your calendar for his Diaconate Ordination Season. See p. 3

### Life in the Novitiate

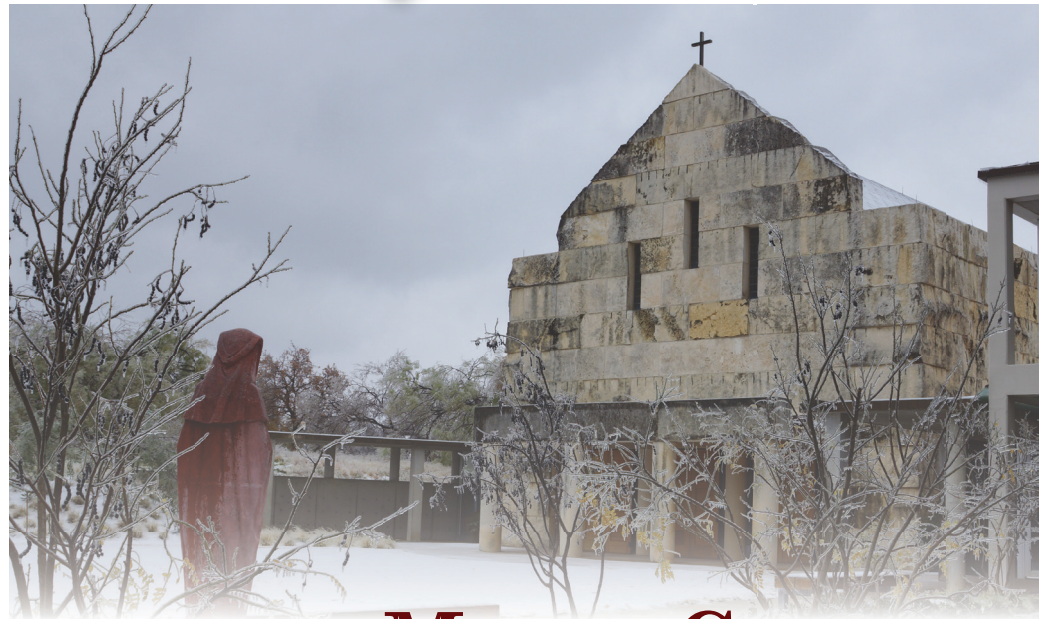
Four young men joined the monastery in August. See pictures of their investiture on pg. 4.

### Priestly Ordination

Fr. John Bayer was ordained a priest in September. Read all about it. See p. 4

### Abbot Wendelin still inspires 70 years later

The monks of Our Lady of Dallas read pastoral letters written by Abbot Wendelin, abbot of Zirc. See pg. 6



## MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM CISTERCIAN

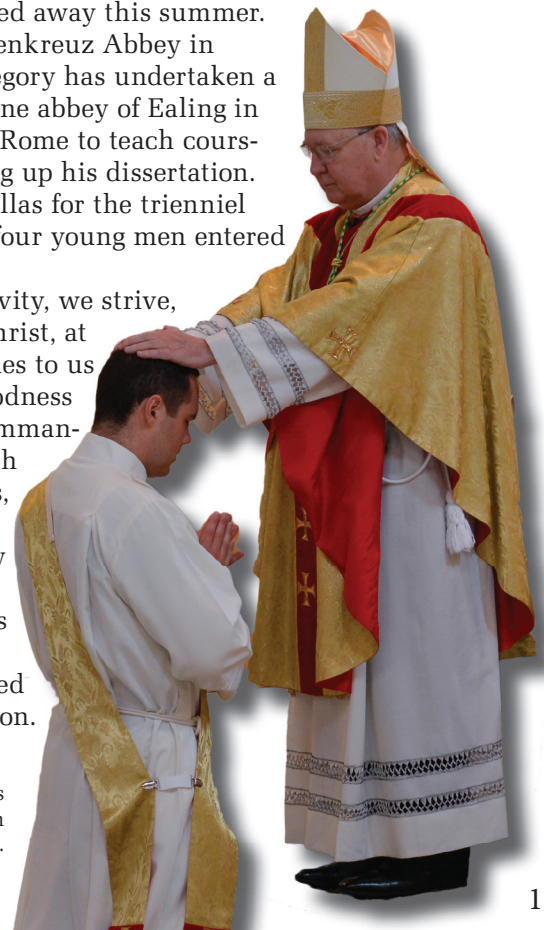
### *A message from the Abbot*

by: Fr. Abbot Peter Verhalen

Much has happened in the Abbey since our last newsletter. Fr. Anthony and Fr. John made solemn vows and were ordained to the priesthood. Fr. Matthew and Fr. Pascal passed away this summer. Fr. Alcuin Schachenmayr, a monk of Heiligenkreuz Abbey in Austria, directed our annual retreat. Fr. Gregory has undertaken a year of studies and renewal at the Benedictine abbey of Ealing in London, and Fr. Thomas has returned from Rome to teach courses at the Prep School and UD while finishing up his dissertation. Archabbot Sixtus, abbot of Zirc, came to Dallas for the triennial Visitation. And, perhaps most importantly, four young men entered the novitiate.

In the midst of all the movement and activity, we strive, however, to prepare our hearts to receive Christ, at Christmas and throughout the year. He comes to us as a gift, like a little child, affirming the goodness and joy of this life. And he comes to us as Immanuel, "God is with us," so that God walks with us through every twist and turn of our lives, strengthening us, sharing his joy with us.

I pray that this Advent you will find a few quiet minutes every day to prepare for the advent of Christ into your lives at Christmas and throughout the year. All of us in the Cistercian Abbey wish you and all your loved ones the renewed joy of this Christmas season.



**A PRIEST FOREVER** Fr. John was ordained by Bishop Farrell in September.

## Christmas with St. Bernard

### LET US GO TO BETHLEHEM!

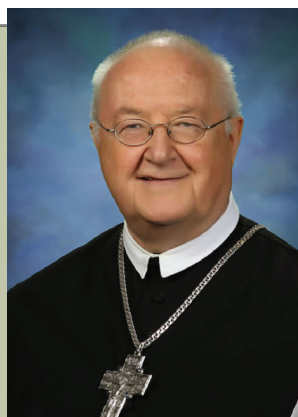
What other time would be better for a pilgrimage to the Holy Land than Christmas, in obedience to the an angelic encouragement: "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." (Lk 2:15)?

Distance and danger, expense and the requirement of stability did not keep the medieval monk from making his pilgrimage. Inspired by a popular etymology of the Hebrew name of the town of Bethlehem, they saw in the town a symbol of the "house" (beth) where "bread"(lechem) was kept and into which they needed to be transformed

St. Bernard, in his *Sermon on the Vigil of Christmas*, wrote: "Keep in mind that he is born in Bethlehem of Judah and see to it that you yourself may be found to be 'Bethlehem of Judah.' May he not consider you unfit to receive him. For Bethlehem means "house of bread" and Judah signifies "confession." Therefore, you also should fill your soul with the food of God's Word and faithfully, with as much devotion as you can although not as much as he deserves, receive this bread, which descended from heaven and gives life to the world, namely the Lord Jesus. In this way may that new flesh of his resurrection renew and nourish the old vessel of your body so that, solidly glued together, it may contain the wine by which it is filled up within. Thus if you live from faith, you should never sigh that you forgot to eat you bread: you became Bethlehem, made worthy by receiving the Lord – yet only if confession has not been omitted."

This is perfect catechesis: make your Christmas confession and Communion, then you must still say "I am not worthy that you should enter into my house!" Incidentally, notice how prudent it was for Benedict XVI to create a precise translation for the Mass: "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof..." You are the house into which the Bread of Life is being deposited!

And of course, Jesus wants you to prepare a house in which he can abide and associate himself though faith and charity to all to whom you say: MERRY CHRISTMAS.



Fr. Denis Farkasfalvy

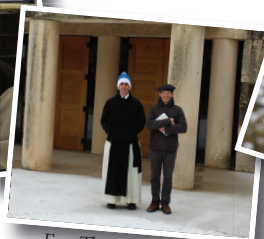
### UPDATE FROM ROME

"I am busy completing the second year of a license degree in dogmatic theology at the Gregorian University, the famous and historical institution founded by St. Ignatius himself in 1551. I am having a blast trying to absorb all that I can from my time here. I have made so many wonderful friends, both within the Cistercian Order and amongst my classmates at the Gregorian. Keep me in your prayers, that I might grow as I should so as to return to Dallas ready to serve in all the ways God has in mind!

Fr. John  
Bayer  
Studying  
in Rome  
this year



Fr. Augustine Hoelke



Frs. Thomas and Stephen



The statue of Mary, covered in ice in December

## Remember

Consider including Cistercian in your will  
and become a member of the

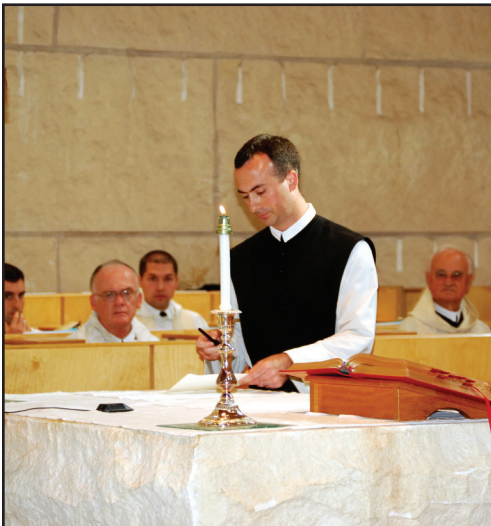
MEMORARE  
SOCIETY

Contact Erin Hart at 469-499-5406 or [ehart@cistercian.org](mailto:ehart@cistercian.org)



# Renewal of Vows

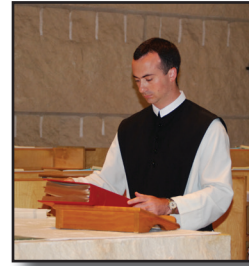
*Br. Justin takes the next step*



On the Feast of the Assumption Br. Justin McNamara renewed his monastic vows. Three years after initial profession, this renewal of vows puts Br. Justin on a path towards taking final vows and ordination in the Spring.

In addition to taking classes at UD, Br. Justin is teaching at the Prep School, is the head librarian, and teaches the Novitiate Latin class.

*"The twin influence of a vibrant community of monks and the prospect of spending a lifetime with them in planting seeds in the Prep school's talented youth have increasingly persuaded me that our Lord has carved out for me a little way to him here at Our Lady of Dallas."*



**Br. Justin McNamara**



*Mark your calendar*



**March 2nd**

Br. Justin's Solemn Profession

**March 8th**

Br. Justin's Ordination to the Diaconate



By his untiring daily participation in the Divine Office, and his faithful and prompt priestly ministry, Fr. Matthew left behind a beautiful example of religious life. At every graduation Cistercian seniors recalled his cheerfulness, which turned the first year of Latin into a happy and memorable experience.

Fr. Matthew Kovacs

## Requiescant in Pace

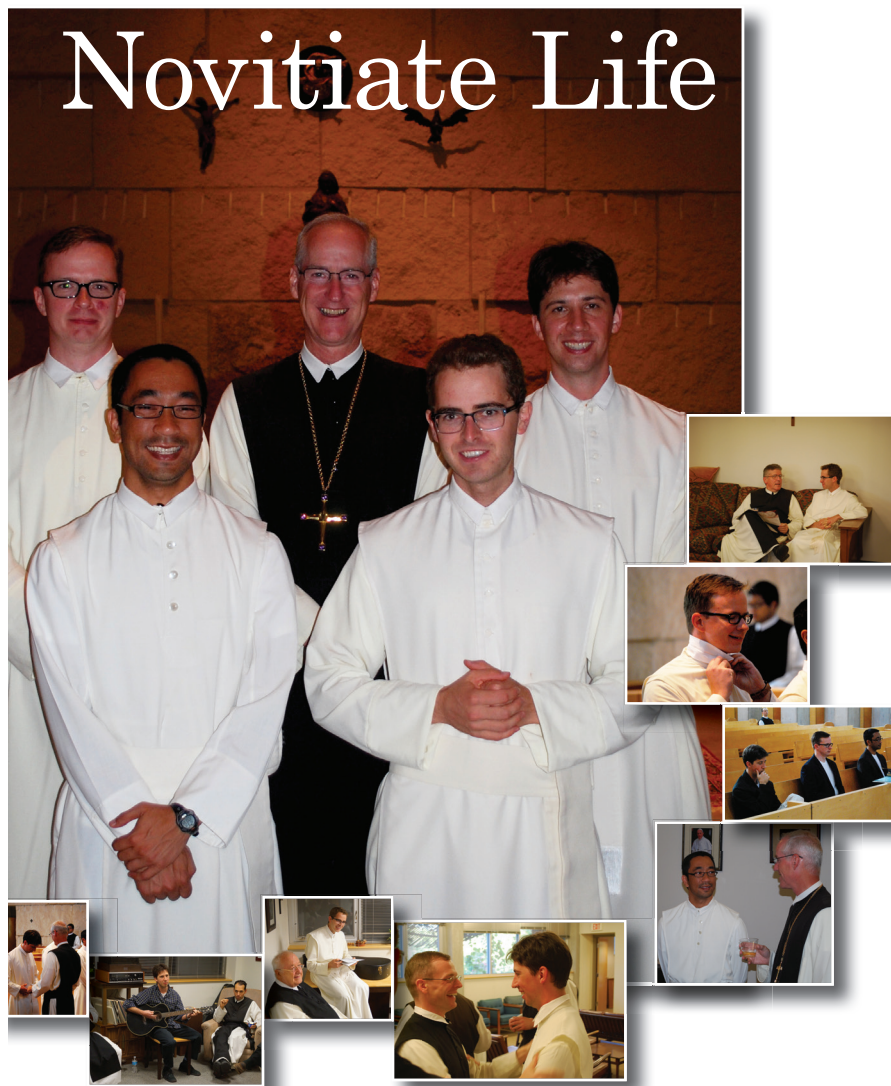
Fr. Pascal Kis-Horvath

Fr. Pascal had an extraordinary talent for understanding, guiding and consoling people of all walks of life and all ages. His deep prayer life, warmth in human relations and pragmatic sense for solving real-life problems made him unforgettable for all who turned to him





# Novitiate Life



## Continuing Education



Fr. Augustine is nearing the end of his MA program in history at the University of Texas in Arlington. He also teaches full time and is the Form IV Form Master



Fr. Thomas has completed his course work at the Biblical Institute in Rome. He's returned to Irving where he is completing his dissertation, on the gospel of Luke.



Fr. Stephen, in addition to teaching at the Prep School, is working toward a Ph.D. in English at the University of Dallas.



Fr. Lawrence is both the form master of Form I, and also wrapping up the coursework in his Ph.D. in mathematics at the University of North Texas



Fr. Anthony, who is teaching at the Prep School this year, is completing his MA in history and government at Texas Woman's University

## Fr. John is Ordained a Priest

On Saturday, August 10, Br. John Bayer was ordained to the priesthood in the Abbey church by Bishop Kevin Farrell of the Diocese of Dallas. The very next day, Sunday, August 11, Fr. John celebrated his first mass at St. Maria Goretti in Arlington, TX, the parish in which he was baptized twenty-nine years ago. Both masses were attended by large crowds of family and friends of Our Lady of Dallas.

Fr. John's first mass at St. Maria Goretti was an uplifting moment, being a sign of both the power of baptismal grace and the love and solidarity of the family of faith. Al-

though many of them did not know him personally, approximately two hundred parishioners of St. Maria Goretti attended Fr. John's first mass, coming simply to celebrate the gift of the priesthood and to give thanks to God for the blessings bestowed on a young man baptized in their parish. Fr. Abbot Denis preached a moving homily on John Paul II's famous motto "Be not afraid" and its application to priestly ministry. Fr. Jim Gigliotti, the pastor of St. Maria Goretti, offered a kind word of encouragement before Fr. John spoke at the end. Following the

mass, members of the parish organized a reception in the Holy Family Life Center, where Fr. John stood to give first blessings until it ended.

Fr. John then returned to Rome to complete his license in dogmatic theology at the Gregorian University. Let us pray for him and for all the monks of Dallas, that they might live well the life of prayer and work to which they have been called.





# Archabbot Sixtus makes official visit

by: Fr. Abbot Peter Verhalen

Archabbot Sixtus Dekany of Zirc spent the week of Nov. 18 – Nov. 25 conducting the official visitation of our monastery, an ancient Cistercian custom dating back to the earliest years of the Order. According to our Constitutions the abbot of Zirc must make an official visit to each of the monasteries in the congregation every three years. During the visitation he should, as the Constitutions state very generally, “inquire into the general state of the monastery in both spiritual and temporal matters.” The visitation provides an opportunity for the monks of one community to speak about their life in the monastery to someone other than their own abbot. It also allows an outsider to observe the monastery’s life and in

consultation with the abbot to offer suggestions for improvement. Before coming to Dallas, Archabbot Sixtus had also conducted the visitation of the Abbey of Kismaros, a community of about 15 Cistercian nuns in Hungary and the third monastery together with Zirc and Dallas constituting the Congregation of Zirc.

The visitation began with a meeting in which the Archabbot offered a brief exhortation to the community to live our Cistercian life faithfully and reported on the abbey of Zirc. He then explained that he comes not as an interrogator but as a confrere hoping to get to know each of the members better.

He arranged opportunities for each of the monks to speak with him privately or in a small group. The obvious task to be overcome was the language barrier.

The Archabbot speaks Hungarian and Italian, no English, and of the 30 members of our monastery only nine are still Hungarian. Fortunately,

some 20 members speak or understand Italian. Archabbot Sixtus communicated quite effectively with all the community in Italian with Fr. Thomas and Fr. Bernard serving as translators.

Saturday morning Archabbot Sixtus held another meeting during which he presented the *Carta Visitationis*, the Letter of Visitation in which he summarizes his observations and recommendations. He captured the tone of the Letter beautifully when, after the letter had been read, he asked for our prayers that the community in Zirc experience a renewal similar to the one God has so generously and graciously granted the monks in Dallas.

Though Archabbot Sixtus had visited Dallas twice in 2012 for the election and benediction of Abbot Peter, this was his first regular visitation of the monastery. Abbot Peter spoke for all the monks when he thanked the Archabbot for the time and hard work he put into the visit. Everyone agreed that Archabbot Sixtus achieved his goal of getting to know the monks of Dallas and encouraging them in their efforts to respond to their vocation.



**CISTERCIAN ABBOTS** Abbot Peter Verhalen with Archabbot Sixtus of Zirc during the triennial visitation in November.

## DISCERNMENT RETREAT: JAN. 18-20, 2014

by: Fr. Thomas Esposito



The Abbey will be hosting a discernment retreat this coming January 18-20. Our goal in offering this retreat is to provide some basic guidelines for a young man trying to follow God’s Will for his life, whether that be a call to join the Abbey or a seminary, or a vocation to marriage. We will offer a series of talks across the three days of the retreat geared toward discernment issues such as: how God speaks to us through our studies/work, how we can prepare ourselves to perceive God guiding our life, what the ideals of the monastic life are, etc.

Those on retreat will do as the monks do for three days: participate at Mass and the daily prayers, eat with the monks, have the opportunity to pray and walk our wooded Stations trail, and speak with monks individually. Anyone who feels that he would profit from this retreat is invited to email me at [fr-thomas@cistercian.org](mailto:fr-thomas@cistercian.org).



If you are discerning a religious vocation and would like to discuss your calling with Fr. Thomas, Vocations Director, he can be reached at [fr-thomas@cistercian.org](mailto:fr-thomas@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 and third Sunday of each month during the school year.



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

For the feast of St. Cecilia, the patron saint of musicians, many members of Our Lady of Dallas joined in a sing-along.

## Abbot Wendelin is remembered as his pastoral letters are read during the evening meals

Abbot Wendelin, the last abbot of the Abbey of Zirc before the suppression of the Order in 1950, wrote a series of pastoral letters to the members of the community in Hungary. Fr. Roch recently translated these spiritually rich letters from Hungarian into English, after which they were read each evening during dinner.

Here are a few excerpts:

The Letter of 1947 gives guidelines and inspiration for Cistercian life and for teaching as part of our vocation. He wrote it one year before our schools were taken away:

“As we thank God for his trust in us, we feel at the same time the responsibility of living up to this extraordinary trust. Our people’s trust derives at the present moment not only from the recognition of our past merits, but it is also the sign of their increasing trust in the Church. An ever-growing number recognizes in the Church the power and the wonder of the God who lives among us, the God who is the only foundation of the life of the na-

tions and the only trustworthy wellspring of even our earthly happiness. The people expect the Spirit of Christ from us and, should they be disappointed, they may perhaps lose Christ again for centuries. We ought to prove ourselves before them as true men, teachers and educators according to the spirit of Christ. We ought to be true priests of Christ, and monks who follow Christ in everything. We ought to bear witness to the spirit of Christ with our every act, with our whole life, because otherwise this generation, a generatio quaerentium Deum, (a generation seeking God) will damn itself.”

The Letter of 1948 adjusts life and spirituality to Cistercian life without schools with increased pastoral responsibilities.

“The love of the liturgy is a special characteristic of our Order, but at the same time it also characterizes the lay Catholic of our times. Therefore whenever we promote the beauty of community worship that uplifts the soul, whenever we nourish in ourselves the spirit of

the liturgy, we follow not only our Cistercian traditions, but we also exercise what is most suitable to winning over those who are yearning for the Church’s communitarian spirituality. I would like to see that our churches and chapels become the hearth of liturgical life so that they may radiate the warmth of a liturgy done with fervor, beauty and in adherence to the laws of the Church.”



Abbot Wendelin shortly before being imprisoned