

CISTERCIANS IN TEXAS



THE 1998 JUBILEE



COMMEMORATING
THE 900TH ANNIVERSARY OF
CISTERCIAN BEGINNINGS
(1098-1998)

AND 40 YEARS OF
CISTERCIAN LIFE IN TEXAS
(1958-1998)

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Cistercians in Texas: A Double Jubilee



*Abbot Denis Farkasfalvy, second
abbot of Our Lady of Dallas.*

The year 1998 invites all who belong to the Cistercian Family and feel indebted to the heritage of Cîteaux to celebrate its 900th anniversary: to reflect and pray about its rich past, assess its message for our present-day life, and ask for God's grace to bless and guide its future.

The Cistercian community in Texas has some special features. We face two historical jubilees, the two dates being separated by more than 850 years. On the one hand, the beginnings of all Cistercian institutions point to the year 1098, during which the monastery of Cîteaux in France was founded. We are, therefore, part of an institution whose roots go back 900 years. This fact fills us with both pride and gratitude, as we acknowledge the thick, fertile soil of tradition, with its rich deposits of learning and experience about our faith, about religious life, and about the nature of history, that nourishes us. On the other hand, our local history stretches back over a relatively short period of time. It was only forty years ago, on February 9, 1958, that the first wing of what is today the monastery "Our Lady of Dallas" opened its doors for a ceremony of solemn dedication. Yet, on that historic day, this monastery was only a dependent priory, becoming a monastery *sui iuris* ("of its own right") only in 1961. Finally, two years later, in 1963, it attained its present status as an independent abbey.

From both a symbolic and historical point of view, forty years form a small but significant period of history, especially in a young country whose national history comprises less than 250 years. This volume, put together with the belief that forty years after their beginnings, the Cistercians of Dallas will be able to give at least a preliminary account of what they have achieved, attempts to stay focused around a single question, Have the Cistercians succeeded in building a home in Texas for all those values which they brought with them?

This volume is meant to be put into the various hands of our friends, the leaders and members of the local church, our students, alumni, and alumni parents as well as those fellow members, men and women, of the worldwide Cistercian community. While its content may not fulfill all expectations, it does attempt to document in a variety of ways the wonderful deeds of God, who continues to do great things through deficient instruments of his grace.

The volume opens with an expert article by Abbot Polycarp Zakar on the origins of Cîteaux. As a formally trained historian, theologian and canon lawyer, Abbot Polycarp is well qualified to speak about the complex question of Cistercian origins from the vantage point of present-day scholarship and monastic theology. For years he taught this material as a professor of Church History and Canon Law at the Pontifical University of Sant' Anselmo in Rome, with numerous Benedictines, Cistercians and Trappists in his audience. His contribution is offered not only as a statement from the present-day Abbot of Zirc but also as a challenging view by a modern historian.

Although not claiming to be a historian, I have attempted, in a relatively long and detailed article, to reconstruct the true — and truly unique — story of the foundation of Our Lady of Dallas. This account is based largely on documents from the abbey's archives that add a certain objective weight to the merely personal recollections of the eyewitnesses. While it is true that forty years may hardly be enough to provide a truly historical perspective, these documents are of such a nature that their interpretation requires a person of my generation and background. Many of them were fully or partially written in Hungarian. Moreover, they are sprinkled with casual or cryptic references to persons and events that, unless they are chronicled, may soon pass into oblivion and remain unknown to members of later generations. Thus, on the one hand, it is almost too early to write such a history (Can we, from a long-term perspective, know as yet what has been founded?); yet, on the other hand, it is almost too late for such a task: we are truly in the 24th hour, the time just before the generation of the first founders passes into a better homeland.

The history of the Cistercian Preparatory School is an integral part of this volume. A special feature of this article comes from the fact that its young author, presently the headmaster, has been with the prep school ever since he was in the 4th grade (known then as "Pre-Form"). He has, therefore, built up in his own mind a cumulative understanding of this institution, beginning as a student, then continuing as an alumnus with a budding vocation for the abbey, then establishing himself as a novice, a junior monk, a priest, a teacher, the Form Master of two classes ('89 and '97), and finally as the headmaster.

The fourth article, written by Fr. Julius Lelóczy, is meant to correct the perception of certain past and present realities within the Cistercian Orders. It is based not only on its author's expertise in the matter (Fr. Julius wrote a doctoral dissertation on the early history of the Cistercians of the Strict Observance) but also on his direct, personal knowledge of many Cistercian institutions, as he spent two years serving the Order as an assistant of the Abbot General in Rome.

The articles on "spirituality" may appear to be somewhat out of

sync in style and approach with the rest of the volume. My article on the use of the Bible in early Cîteaux was originally presented to the members of the Cistercian General Chapter of 1995, then in a somewhat different format to a session of the Medieval Congress of 1997 at Western Michigan State University in Kalamazoo. This multiple use of the same material might excuse its much-too-technical detail and the abundance of footnotes that are not quite consistent with the less formal tone of this volume. Fr. Roch Kereszty's article is also a small part of a more extensive inquiry he has made and has partially published elsewhere. In addition, Dr. Pruitt's essay on the Cistercian Church as a modern representative of Cistercian architecture is derived from the much more technically composed senior thesis of Pauline Hugger, written in preparation for her degree in Fine Arts at the University of Dallas. Finally, we have added to the risk of mixing diverse material in the same volume by including a third section for the purpose of memorializing two persons whose historical role in starting our monastery and school cannot be underestimated. In the short time since his death in 1981, Abbot Wendelin Endrédy has become in Hungary an icon of the persecuted religious man, leader and priest. But for the Cistercians of Dallas, he always represented not only the lasting values of the Abbey of Zirc, standing in his witness for faithfulness and perseverance, but he was also the personification of the ideal which each one of us has tried to put into reality in our individual lives. Besides being a fully dedicated monk and priest, Abbot Wendelin was as well a superb teacher of mathematics and physics and, further, a man of vibrant and rich intellectual life, capable of uniting rigorous and sober rational thought with a warm, generous, emotional connectedness with all his brothers and sons. The sufferings he had to undergo for his flock authenticated his deep love for his community, a love that never stiffened into mere idealism or activism but was directed with intimate immediacy toward every person in the realm of our new monastery and school. Therefore, not only nominally and officially was he a founder of Our Lady of Dallas, but for decades he effectively influenced those crucial events out of which the two institutions, abbey and school, took shape.

The pages written in memory of Abbot Anselm cannot claim to have been written from a sufficiently broad historical perspective. For three fourths of its brief history, up until April 4, 1988, Abbot Anselm was the effective superior of the monastery; in fact, even now almost every detail of life within its walls wears his fingerprint. It is only fitting that this volume be dedicated also to the memory of him who had the greatest share of work in the monastery's first three decades.

The volume ends with the necrology of the monastery, with seven biographical sketches of the members who have died here since the foundation. May these last pages become an effective reminder to you, the reader, not to put this book aside without a prayer for their souls, and indeed for the whole Cistercian family who seek God in this tradition which, by His grace, is alive and well also here in Texas, 900 years after its inception.

*Abbot Denis Farkasfalvy, O. Cist.
Our Lady of Dallas, Irving, Texas
March 1998*

Our Common Beginnings: 900 Years Ago

Abbot Polycarp Zakar, O. Cist.

The Circumstances of Its Foundation

In the year 1098, Abbot Robert and twenty-one of his associates left the monastery of Molesme and moved to a place about twenty km from the city of Dijon, called Cistercium. Here they founded a new monastery which for about twenty years simply carried the name *novum monasterium*.

In the opinion of many, even into our own day, this foundation came about in response to the fact that the religious discipline of the "Benedictines," including those of Molesme, had become lax and needed a reform of some sort. Hence, according to this theory, the "Cistercian Order" which this year celebrates its 900th birthday, came about as "a reformed version" of Benedictine monasticism. Since, however, no historical event is ever as simple as it appears in its summarized, textbook form, this article has the task of disentangling this issue, of describing what exactly happened in Cîteaux in 1098, and then of assessing its significance for the establishment of what we call today "the Cistercians."

If the word "Order" (in the sense of religious order) is used in its present-day meaning, one must state right away that 900 years ago nobody could have thought of "founding the Cistercian Order" for the simple reason that in the 11th century no "religious orders" as such existed, including the "Benedictine Order." In fact, strictly speaking what we call today the "Benedictine Order" is only a confederation of religious congregations (created under Pope Leo XIII on July 12, 1893), which itself stated at its very establishment that it does not intend to constitute an "Order" in the canonical sense. Those religious men and women who put after their name the three letters OSB (*Ordinis Sancti Benedicti*) are thereby only signifying that they belong to some religious congregation which follows the Rule of St. Benedict. Back in the 11th century, the word "order" as referring to a religious organization meant only "a way of life" or "observance."

A Few Words About the Sources

For centuries, historians drew their knowledge about the origins of Cîteaux from two documents, two "exordia", the *Exordium Magnum* and the *Exordium Parvum*. The former is a work woven of facts, legends and theological reflections. Its author's name was Konrad; he was a monk of Clairvaux and completed this work in the last years of the 12th century. He died as abbot of Eberbach in 1221. The latter is an earlier and much shorter compilation which contains, however, much more reliable historical information about the origins of Cîteaux. Its author is unknown and it contains seventeen brief chapters.

The first major discovery of modern historiography concerning the origins of Cîteaux was made at the beginning of our century, when Tiburtius



The Virgin Mary as Patroness of the Cistercians (monks and nuns under the leadership of St. Bernard). Jean Prévost, 16th Century.

Hümpfner, a monk of Zirc in Hungary, found in Austria a manuscript containing the unabridged text of the *Exordium Magnum*. On the basis of this manuscript he was able to show that, after the canonization of St. Robert in 1222, the chapters of the *Exordium Magnum* criticizing Robert for abandoning Cîteaux were excised and only a mutilated text was passed down in the vast majority of the codices. Fr. Hümpfner's publication in 1908 of the formerly unknown passages led historians to suspect that other surprises about early Cîteaux would inevitably surface.

These discoveries did not wait for long. In 1927, a canon of Toulouse, a former Trappist named Robert Trilhe, discovered a manuscript which contained both a brief two-chapter summary of the origins of Cîteaux and a shorter four-chapter version of the Cistercians's first constitution, the *Carta Caritatis*. Trilhe's most important discovery, however, consisted in the recognition that this "summary" of the *Carta Caritatis* was in fact an earlier and until then unknown version of the text itself. A third discovery occurred in 1939 in Ljubljana (Slovenia) when Josef Turk uncovered an even earlier, previously lost version of the same document which he named *Carta Caritatis Prior*.

Following WWII, the systematic search and comparison of the sources began, and it soon became clear that all former views about the *Exordium Parvum* had been incorrect. Two fundamental corrections especially needed to be made: first, it was not written in 1119 but later; second, it was not composed as a historical "introduction" to the *Carta Caritatis*, but rather was a second version of a shorter and earlier document, discovered by Trilhe and named by him the *Exordium Cistercii*. As a result of these discoveries, historians began to realize that Cîteaux was founded as one of many similar foundations, and in order to tell the "true story" of this founding, one must look at its historical context, comprising all contemporary monastic movements.

The Beginnings of Cîteaux and the Rule of St. Benedict

Both the *Exordium Magnum* and the *Exordium Parvum* emphasized that Cîteaux was founded for the sake of a return to the "purity" of St. Benedict's Rule (*puritas Regulae, recitudo Regulae*). What then did this term mean at the end of the 11th century? To understand its meaning, we must take a quick look at how the Rule has historically been used in Western monasticism.

Rules, the ultimate purpose of which is to regulate monastic life in service of the Gospel, were being written as early as the 4th century. The Rule of St. Benedict, written in the middle of the 6th century, emerged to take an eminent place among these early Rules. According to the Benedictine Rule, the monastery is the school of God's service, where the monks, living in community under Christ as their head, are led on the way of God's precepts. Their life represents a balanced regime in which divine praise (*opus Dei*), spiritual reading (*lectio divina*), physical work (*labor manuum*) and other daily occupations harmonically blend.

For the founders of Cîteaux, as for medieval monks in general, the example of Benedict's life was of great importance. What we know of his life is contained in Pope Gregory the Great's biography, which is written as a



*St. Benedict gives the Rule to
Abbot Theobald (from a
manuscript of Monte Cassino).*

series of dialogues. In this work Benedict is described as a “man of God” (*vir Dei*), a man who lived from and for God. Benedict is pictured receiving a multitude of people from the vicinity, and, though not a priest, of taking up the task of leading them to the faith by “continuous preaching” (*praedicatione continua*). Gregory also writes that Benedict sent the brothers to the nearby town to exhort the nuns who lived there. The most important passage, however, for the future of the Rule was the following statement of the *Dialogues*: he (Benedict) wrote a Rule for monks, and it was a work clear in its presentation and outstanding through its moderation (*discretione praecipuam*). Many historians think that it was through this one sentence of Gregory the Great that the Rule of Saint Benedict obtained its importance in the history of the Church and of Western civilization.

One must say in clarification, however, that Benedict did not found a religious order the way in which St. Dominic or St. Ignatius later did. He “merely” wrote a Rule, and even in the Rule he left a large range of issues up to the discretion of the abbot of the monastery, a fact which presents a quite open and rather “humane,” balanced and moderate, view of the monastic life. A few examples may help to understand the spirit of Benedict’s Rule. At a time when even Popes were not truly elected but rather the reigning Pope simply named his own successor (and, by general practice, the elderly abbots of the monasteries appointed their successors), Benedict prescribed that the abbot be chosen by election.

Benedict was evidently a rather humble and modest legislator. For example, after arranging with great care the liturgical use of the psalms, and filling ten chapters with detailed directives concerning the order of psalmody, he added: “Let us explicitly state that, if for someone this arrangement of the Psalms does not appear to be good, he should organize them differently, if

he finds a better system." Benedict wanted the abbot of the monastery to display a similar modesty in running his monastery. Thus he prescribed that in all important issues the abbot should listen to the advice of all his monks, and added the following words: "We said that he should seek advice from all his monks," because the Lord often manifests to the youngest what is a better course of action." The Rule calls attention to the fact that in the monastery's life all things must be in their place, that prayer, work, and rest must be distributed in well-balanced harmony.

According to tradition, Benedict died in 547, and shortly thereafter, in 577, his monks were expelled from Montecassino, and the famous monastery was not revived for 170 years. Benedict's monks took refuge in Rome, and therefore, it has long been assumed that, after Benedict's death, monastic life in the monasteries of Rome was organized according to his Rule. Recent investigations, however, have shown that this was not the case. In actual fact, an epoch of "mixed rules" began after Benedict's death; most monasteries drew from several different Rules, including his. It appears that even Pope Gregory's *Dialogues* reflect a mixture of several different Rules and observances, so that it is quite inexact to speak of even him as a "Benedictine."

Strangely enough, it was in England that, by the end of the 7th century, the Rule of Benedict first became the basic document of monastic life, a fact which can be attributed to Pope St. Gregory's words of praise about the Rule in his *Dialogues*. Another significant step toward the broad acceptance of the Benedictine Rule took place at the time of Charlemagne, who wanted monastic life in his Empire to be organized according to identical rules and customs. Another Benedict, Benedict of Aniane, was at this time establishing the Benedictine Rule as the standard through his two influential works about monastic life (*Codex Regularum* and *Concordia Regularum*) both of which were based on "the Roman Rule" of St. Benedict.

One must also mention as another factor in the formation of Benedictine life and custom, the general "clericalization" of monastic life in the early Middle Ages. Liturgical prayers began to obtain an ever larger emphasis, while physical labor lost its importance. It was Benedict of Aniane who introduced the so-called "triple prayer" (*trina oratio*), the daily recitation of 15 Psalms, five for the living, five for the dead in general, and five for particular persons recently deceased. In addition to the prayers prescribed by the Rule of Benedict, the monks had to recite these 15 Psalms, plus ten more Psalms after night prayer in wintertime, or five in the summer. The delegates of the Carolingian imperial court inspected individual monasteries and imposed everywhere identical customs and rituals.

Similar tendencies continued in the monasteries belonging to the 10th-century reform of Cluny, where the "triple prayer" consisted of a total of thirty Psalms. Eventually, the daily Divine Office of Cluny mushroomed to the point that each day they had to recite 215 or even 240 psalms. The morning prayer of Cluny (called the *Prima* or "first hour") alone consisted of 26 Psalms. The whole organization of monastic life had undergone major distortions. The abbots living under the jurisdiction of Cluny, to cite an important example, lost their independence, leaving the abbot of Cluny, who took the title of *abbas abbatum*, as the only true abbot.

In reaction to such change, a new movement began in Italy, spread-

ing to the North. Under the influence of this movement, which promoted eremitic life with emphasis on solitude, poverty and silence, St. Robert founded Molesme in 1075. Molesme fell quickly back under Cluny's influence, having become wealthy, and the monastery departed from its original aspirations. Viewing this departure with dismay, a group of monks began to make plans for a new foundation which, in 1098, became a reality.

The Foundation of Cîteaux according to the Exordium Cistercii and the Exordium Parvum

These two documents contain no indication about the time at which they were written. The manuscripts in which they survived are also dated only with difficulty. The oldest manuscript containing the *Exordium Cistercii* was written at about 1130, while the oldest manuscript containing the *Exordium Parvum* is of somewhat later origin.

The two documents greatly differ in their judgment of the monastery of Molesme. The *Exordium Cistercii*, on the one hand, makes the following, more positive statement:

As it is well known, in the diocese of Langres there is a monastery of good reputation, outstanding in monastic zeal. Briefly after its foundation, in short time, it was blessed by the riches of God's goodness and was brought to great fame through the excellent men who joined its ranks. Through the abundance of its possessions and the resplendent virtues of its members it became great. ... They [the founders of Cîteaux] had realized that the life they were leading there was indeed pious and magnificent, but it corresponded only in small measure to the Rule which according to their desires and intentions they had vowed to follow.

In the text of the *Exordium Parvum*, on the other hand, we read the following, more critical passage:

These men [the founders of Cîteaux], inspired by God's grace, began to speak among themselves already in Molesme about the observance of the Rule of their Father St. Benedict. They shared their complaints and sorrows, as they realized that they had promised by solemn vow to follow this Rule, but did not keep it at all, and thus they knowingly sinned by transgressing their vows. Afterwards, the abbot and his brethren, remembering their promises, decided that at that place [namely Cîteaux] they would regulate their lives according to the Rule of St. Benedict which they wanted to keep. They renounced anything that was not compatible with the Rule.

From several manuscripts the phrase "knowingly sinned by transgressing their vows" is missing. But even without that phrase this text offers

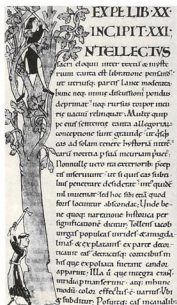
a very harsh judgment on Molesme, while the *Exordium Cistercii* represents a substantially different outlook. In any case, it appears clear that the monks moving to Cîteaux were focused on putting in practice the Rule of Benedict in a way different from that of Molesme.

The Time and Place of the Foundation of Cîteaux

Concerning the exact date of the foundation, both the *Exordium Cistercii* and the *Exordium Parvum* mention merely the year 1098 without any further precision. The *Exordium Magnum* states that the foundation took place on the feast of St. Benedict, March 21, and that it coincided with Palm Sunday. But it should be remembered, of course, that this precise date was written down 100 years after the event with the date's symbolic significance purposely emphasized in the text. One may, indeed, wonder how convenient it would be for the foundation to have taken place one week before Easter.

Concerning the precise place of the foundation, the *Exordium Cistercii* includes the following description:

They came to a wilderness, a wasteland of howling desert. They agreed that the harshness of the place corresponded to the strictness of the ideas which they were carrying in their minds.



Monks chopping a tree. Illustration from an early manuscript of *Cîteaux*, copied in 1111.

The phrase about the "wilderness, a wasteland of howling desert" is a biblical quotation of *Deuteronomy* (32:10), and thus it must be taken as the expression of a theological ideal (the "pilgrimage across the desert" after the Exodus) rather than a geographic description. Another, similar description is found in the *Exordium Parvum*:

With zeal they set out to the wasteland, called Cîteaux. This terrain belongs to the diocese of Chalon and because it was densely covered by thorns and thistle, people did not frequent it, but it was inhabited mostly by animals. As the men of God arrived here, they judged the place convenient for themselves, all the more since it was despised and inaccessible for others. They cut the thorns and thistles and made a clearance in the bushes.

Contemporary sources, however, indicate that while Cîteaux was covered by forests, it was not entirely uninhabited. In fact, Count Raynald, the former owner of the land, also gave to the monks a small church situated on the acreage which must have been built both by and for some people who lived in its vicinity. Moreover, it is well known that a busy highway passed near the present site of the monastery, and the hypothesis that the original location of the monastery was further off to north remains unproven. It is most probable, then, that the founders did not start their enterprise in a truly deserted place.

Saint Robert, the First Abbot of Cîteaux

Born around 1028, somewhere near Champagne, Robert founded Molesme in 1075 and was nearly 70 years old when he led his twenty-one companions to Cîteaux, the founding of which was described in an account given in 1122-23 by William of Malmesbury. According to all indications the chief mover was Stephen Harding, a former Benedictine from England who later had been a student in Paris and through his travels in Italy became acquainted with recent monastic movements in that region. Greatly influenced by what he had witnessed there, he began to question all monastic exercises not prescribed by or mentioned in the Rule: "he began pressing questions about their reason" (*rationem eorum efflagitare coepit*). This attitude led to the principle that, regarding the exercises of monastic life, they should abandon all those which do not correspond to the Rule of St. Benedict.

Although Robert was the founding abbot, in Cîteaux itself, up to the 17th century, his name was not listed among the former abbots, an omission which clearly shows that some of his own companions resented the fact that within eighteen months he had returned to his previous foundation. Even today Cistercians speak about Robert as a "halfway" founder because he did not persevere with his foundation. Consequently, his personal story still appears as a mystery asking for explanation.

The *Exordium Cistercii* is quite curt about him and the *Exordium Par-*

now does little beyond reproducing a letter by Hugh, the papal legate, to the Archbishop of Langres in which is found the following terse directive: "We return him [Robert] to you so that you may reinstate him as abbot of Molesme. Should he, with his customary levity [*solita levitate*], leave again..."

Of course, the expression "customary levity" expresses a rather negative opinion about his character, for it suggests that he was accustomed to taking decisions not only with ease but with a touch of irresponsibility. Even harsher in his view of St. Robert is the author of the *Exordium Magnum*, who charges him with losing his monastic zeal. But, as was mentioned above, in 1220, briefly after the *Exordium Magnum* had been written, Robert was canonized (as far as we know, the canonization was promoted by the Cistercians) and so the chapters that judged him negatively were excised from all later copies. Only in 1908 did a manuscript of the original text surface.

The Purpose and Significance of the Foundation of Cîteaux

Though the complexity of this issue merits a separate article, one main point concerning the role of work in the monastic schedule can be treated here briefly. Nowadays it is customary to quote the motto "*Ora et labora*" as the program of the Rule of St. Benedict. Less well known, however, is the fact that this phrase is not found in the Rule and was not even formulated until the late 19th century, by Maurus Wolters, the founder of the German Benedictine Abbey of Beuron. Benedict himself speaks of manual labor in the 48th chapter of his Rule, his basic thesis being that "idleness is the enemy of the soul." He later adds:

But if the local conditions or the poverty of the monastery would require that they themselves collect the harvest, they must not be discouraged, for then they are truly monks if they live from the labor of their own work, as did our Fathers and the apostles. However, all must be done with moderation because of those of little courage.

St. Benedict was certainly aware of the Pauline teaching that "he who does not work should not eat." (2 *Thess* 3:11). Nevertheless he had probably also accepted the customs and views of his age, which did not consider farming as an appropriate job for monks. It is, in fact, interesting to see what the contemporary *Rule of the Master* (*Regula Magistri*), a text which St. Benedict knew well and repeatedly used for composing his rule, says about farming. Its views undoubtedly reflect the mentality of 6th century monks in Italy. According to the 86th chapter of *The Rule of the Master*, the monks should lease out their land so that they will not have to worry about farming it.

Then, in a lengthy subsequent passage, two relevant arguments are further developed. In the first, the author states that farming is an appropriate job for people who cannot be occupied with spiritual matters, and in the second, that monks should be fasting, and for that reason, they cannot be expected to do the physical labor required for farming. To put it briefly, in this 6th-century perspective one must not expect the outline of "a theology of work," as it would be developed in our own day. In fact, in addition to



Monk at harvest. From an early manuscript of Cîteaux, copied in 1111.

these two reasons expressed in the *Rule of the Master*, there was a third one, based on the prevailing social background of early monasticism. Leaving behind the world and retiring to a monastery (*recessus in monasterium*) was patterned in the age of Late Antiquity after the practice of the nobility retiring to their country estates (*secessus in villam*). Moreover, as it was the case for any estate of those times, the monasteries were run with the help of servants, hired for physical labor.

In later times the status of work underwent considerable change. St. Boniface, for example, expected his monks to do missionary work, while Charlemagne, in his "general instruction" (*admonitio generalis*), addressing the monasteries of his Empire, decreed that every monastery must run a school. Thus it was in Carolingian times that monasteries became centers of intensive intellectual work, and the monks became regarded as guardians of the cultural heritage. At the time of St. Benedict of Aniane monastic life became more focused on the liturgy. This new focus contributed to Cluny's decision to exclude children from its monasteries, even though they are repeatedly mentioned in St. Benedict's Rule. As liturgical activities occupied an increasing part of the day, there was not enough time left for serious physical or intellectual work. This latter aspect of monastic life was changed by the founders of Cîteaux. Not only did they introduce the institution of the lay brothers (and in addition to them, they were willing to employ hired help as well), but they expected all monks to spend a substantial time in daily work.

In conclusion, we must not imagine that in 1098 the first community of Cîteaux lived in the same way that Benedict lived in Montecassino in the 6th century. For one thing, like Cluny, Cîteaux excluded the presence of children from the monastery. In addition, the institution of lay brothers, as established in Cîteaux, cannot be fitted very well into the frame of life which St. Benedict had envisioned. Yet, in spite of retaining a number of customs from the age of St. Benedict of Aniane, Cîteaux succeeded in re-establishing a new harmony between common prayer, spiritual reading and meditation, and daily work as one of its distinct achievements in renewing monastic life.

Did the founders of Cîteaux ever think of "founding" a new religious order? Most probably not. Such a goal would have been anachronistic for their time. Besides, they were just too busy living their lives.

*Cistercians in Texas:
The Foundation of Our Lady of Dallas*

Abbot Denis Farkasfalvy, O. Cist.



*Abbot General Sigward
Kleiner, Bishop Thomas K.
Gorman of Dallas, and Fr.
Anselm Nagy at the festive
dinner on February 9, 1958.*

Forty Years Ago

On February 9, 1958, Bishop Thomas K. Gorman of Dallas-Fort Worth dedicated the first wing of a newly founded Cistercian monastery at the edge of the campus of the University of Dallas, itself a new institution founded two years earlier. While the monastery was juridically still a "dependent priory" belonging to a suppressed Abbey in Communist-dominated Hungary, it was practically on its own, struggling for an independent existence in a new homeland. The monks were all refugees from Hungary who had left their country under various circumstances during the post-war period.

At the dinner table Prior Anselm Nagy expressed his gratitude for the generosity of the Bishop and the kindness of the Cistercian Abbot General, the guests of honor. The latter had made a special trip to America to attend this event. Fr. Anselm spoke of the trials and tribulations that had preceded the community's arrival in Dallas by referring to "thirteen years of struggle" during which, he stated, "we always felt the presence of God's guiding hand."

In speaking of the "thirteen years," Fr. Anselm was reflecting not only on the post-war era in general, but also specifically on his own personal journey that had begun in 1945, when he left Hungary and traveled first to Rome and soon thereafter to America, gradually embarking on the God-given task which led to the foundation of the monastery "Our Lady of Dallas."

On this same day of February 9, 1958, Abbot General Sigward issued a "Letter of Visitation," the first of its kind for the new monastery. It is a most remarkable document, for it opens with the sentence: "Not without anxiety did we [plural of majesty in the style of the fifteens!] come to you, dear sons, for we were divided, on the one hand, by the joy felt for your successful foundation and festal gathering, and, on the other hand, by the apprehension

concerning the ill feelings generated in the process. Yet the Lord has opened your hearts so that you became magnanimous beyond what we had hoped for." This sentence is a barely veiled reference to what had happened five years earlier, when Abbot Sighard had clashed with the community while they were still living in Wisconsin, and had left them with no support for the foundation of a monastery in which they could live the life they were seeking. Now he was learning a new feature of this community: they had apparently forgotten and forgiven the events of five years earlier as they showed him enthusiastically their new monastery that had come about contrary to all expectations. The rest of the "Letter of Visitation" was, as a response to this positive attitude, full of praise and approval for their way of life, including the special value and legitimacy of their vocation, combining monastic life, teaching and scholarship with ministry in the priesthood.

Speaking at the celebration, Fr. Anselm also reminded the guests of the imprisoned Abbot of Zirc, Wendelin Endrédi, who had been released from prison the previous year, but continued to remain under house arrest. "Our Abbot" — the Prior said — "is spiritually with us tonight, for he received my printed invitation, knows about this event and is giving thanks with us for this day on which, after so many struggles, we have found a true home." A few days later Abbot Wendelin's letter arrived from Hungary, congratulating the community on the new foundation. He was calling to their mind the motto which Zirc had adopted during his abbacy from the writings of St. Bernard:

"I ask you, my dearest Sons, that your life be in the new monastery a continued realization of the motto *ARDERE ET LUCERE*. For only the unity of the two is a true path to perfection: to enlighten only is vanity, to be



Abbot Sighard and Bishop Gorman in the hallway of the newly dedicated wing of the monastery, February 9, 1958.

afame only is insufficient. To be afame and to enlighten is perfection. Do not ever forget that you should combine your work of learning and teaching with true piety: *scientia cum pietate*."

Now, forty years after the completion of the first wing of the Abbey, it is time to narrate the story which led some thirty monks across the ocean to start the first Cistercian community ever formed in Texas.

The story presented here does not follow a straight narrative line; it is complicated by the diversity of the participants, the confusing changes of world events, and the unpredictability of human decisions, but it is a unique manifestation of an old proverbial expression which Paul Claudel used as the motto of his play *The Silk Slipper* (*Le soulier de satin*): "God writes straight along crooked lines."

The Hungarian Background

This story is hardly intelligible without a thorough and serious look at the Hungarian Cistercians, both as members of a nation and heirs to the traditions of a religious Order.

First, this story is about Hungarians. The implications of this fact may not be easy to understand in this part of the world where national identity is relatively young, the "melting pot" is the most popular paradigm, and language is not thought of as an essential tool for establishing identity. In 1996, Hungary celebrated the 1100th anniversary of its existence as a nation. Every person raised as a Hungarian is keenly aware of the unique features of his or her mother tongue, a language that lacks resemblance to all major idioms of the world and conveys upon its native speakers a sense both of isolation and of singularity. In spite of their many international ties, the Cistercian community in Hungary cultivated a sense of uniqueness in spirit, history and tradition even within their own religious order and were quite proud of all, or at least most, of their distinctive features. People who carry in themselves such a

"There is a mystique about the abbey. I think it originates from the fact that there is an element here that is hard to know, hard to penetrate. I did not realize this difficulty when I was younger. I arrived here at the age of 27 with my education already basically complete. I came as a *bona fide* foreigner and have remained so ever since. I was aware of it and accepted it at the time, but what I did not know at the time was that 32 years later there would be a very important part of me that just doesn't in a sense belong to me, and I cannot fully accept this. If I go back to Hungary to see my brother and my sister, I function for a while until they figure out that I said something that sounds like I haven't been here for the last 30 years. But I speak with a genuine Hungarian accent and I write in Hungarian correctly without mistakes. It is as if I have been fooling my language and my culture for 30 years. Yet, on the other hand, my bilingual, bicultural experience is a positive thing because it also enables me to try to accommodate two very different groups. I think in my present job as abbot this is very helpful and very good."

*Abbot Denis Farkasfalvy, O.Cist.
Informer interview, February 1996*

sense of identity are, in general, no "happy immigrants," for they lack the eagerness to adjust to a new lifestyle or a new cultural environment. They tend to spend a lifetime preoccupied with their lost identity.

From the middle of the 19th century until the mid-1950's, the Cistercians of Hungary, although living in eight different religious houses, all belonged to the single monastery of Zirc and had only one major superior, the abbot of Zirc. By the outbreak of the Second World War their number was approaching 200. When, at the peace conferences following the First World War, new borders were drawn for Central and Eastern Europe, their homeland was splintered into many small ethnic nations. The Holy See, making accommodations for the new political circumstances, erected a separate Cistercian monastic congregation for the monks of Zirc, and thus, in fact, made the members of this community feel as if they formed a self-contained religious order. Up to this day, the Cistercians in Hungary refer to their small community as "our Order." In their usage, unless the context tells otherwise, reference to "our Order" always means the professed monks of the Abbey of Zirc, not the world-wide community of the Cistercians.

For all the above reasons, it appears, therefore, quite natural that in their 800-year old history, the Cistercians of Hungary had never undertaken a foundation outside of the confines of their homeland. They saw their culture deeply rooted in an old provincial and patriotic outlook which they formulated in a proverbial saying in Latin: "*Extra Hungariam non est vita*," ("Outside of Hungary there is no life") and to which they were fond of adding: "*Si est vita, non est ita*," ("And if there is life, it is not *this kind of life*.) One must, therefore, treat the foundation of "Our Lady of Dallas," a late off-shoot of the Abbey of Zirc, as a true anomaly, an enterprise which the participants considered not only as a challenge but more often as an imposition by Providence, calling them to go beyond their cultural limitations and interest.

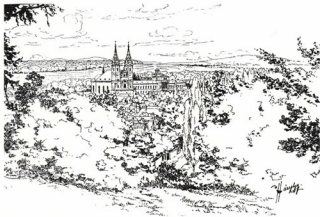
In Hungary itself, the Cistercian Order has had a rather long history. The first Cistercian monks arrived in the country in the heyday of the Order's first expansion. Coming from Austria less than fifty years after Cîteaux's foundation and just eleven years before St. Bernard's death, they established their first Hungarian abbey, named Gikádor. Forty years later the reigning monarch, Béla III, invited monks from various French abbeys and gave royal lands and benefits for establishing new foundations in his reign. Zirc, the only one of these foundations to be revived in modern times, was founded in 1182 by monks who came from St. Bernard's own abbey, Clairvaux. They brought with them the prestige of French architecture and French culture.

When in the 16th century a large part of Hungary fell victim to the Ottoman Turkish invasion, all monasteries (Benedictine, Cistercian, Norbertin, Dominican, Carthusian) perished, their buildings destroyed and their possessions taken by secular powers. Restoration began only at the very end of the 17th century. In the case of Zirc, after several unsuccessful attempts, the first moves for a successful second foundation came about only in 1699. At that time, with the Turkish occupation terminated, German monks of Heinrichau in Silesia (today Henryków in Poland) took possession of the ruined buildings and acquired possession of the Abbey's goods. Restoration and reconstruction took more than half a century, and it wasn't until the early 1800's that the abbey finally obtained a sizable Hungarian membership. Yet

the monastery still remained formally dependent on its new German owner; the abbot of Henrichau took the title of the abbot of Zirc and governed the Hungarian monastery with a prior as his delegate.

After 1814 and the conclusion of the Napoleonic wars, two major events changed the life of Zirc. On the one hand, due to a number of both external causes and internal motives, the monks of Zirc took upon themselves the work of teaching and education in three cities (Eger, Pécs, Székesfehérvár) and moved into residences built in those localities. On the other hand, the abbey of Heinrichau fell victim to Prussian absolutism: Silesia was annexed by Prussia and thus Heinrichau — along with other monasteries — was suppressed by the king. In 1814 the last abbot of Heinrichau died, ending 115 years of foreign authority over Zirc. All at once, then, Zirc found itself independent, and thus its mostly Hungarian membership elected a Hungarian abbot. Within a few years the Cistercians in Hungary became a religious order of educators with the task of providing faculty and financial support for three major city schools. At the same time their new identity as a "Hungarian Abbey" inspired them to undertake the task of educating their pupils in the current spirit of a romantic national revival. For the rest of the 19th century the Abbey of Zirc, while wrestling with its new self-image, tried to combine religious life, patriotism, and pedagogy by constantly expanding the number of its educational institutions.

For Hungary, the First World War ended in tragedy. As the Austro-Hungarian Empire was dismantled, Hungary lost two-thirds of its territory, and over three million Hungarians found themselves outside their homeland. But, for a number of reasons, most of them geographic, the Cistercians of Zirc began a period of growth and expansion, rather than decline. The new borders did not touch any of their schools, houses or properties. Instead, it



The abbey of Zirc in Hungary in 1890. Ink-drawing by Gy. Háry.

was precisely after the First World War that their most promising projects took shape and obtained success. The new Cistercian school and parish of Budapest, founded in 1912, brought the Cistercians in contact with the rapidly growing intellectual and spiritual life of the capital. The new parish of St. Emery was, in fact, a unique enterprise. In a pastorally long-neglected area, the Cistercian priests began their work with a three-pronged approach. They established a vigorously active parish center, instituted a new school with an ambitious program and the best faculty they could find, and, finally, sprinkled their steadily increasing parish with temporary chapels erected in basements and garages of large apartment buildings in order to gain a greater closeness to their parishioners.

This new and aggressive approach to the problems of a rapidly growing city not only fostered a sudden growth in the spiritual landscape of Budapest, but also called attention to the Order's vitality and will to live. Dedication to priestly work and pastoral concerns significantly grew among the members. At the same time there also appeared a growing interest in the monastic and contemplative traditions of the early Cistercians. From the beginning of this century, studies in medieval Cistercian history and spirituality multiplied, leading to study trips abroad, research projects, and publications. The number of vocations steadily grew as well. Due to the single-handed performance of one monk, Julius Hagyó-Kovács, caretaker of the Abbey's goods and a recognized economist, the Abbey's income from its vast latifundia began to grow in an unprecedented boom and provided sufficient financial support for all this expansion.

At the threshold of the Second World War, the Cistercians were regarded as a most promising portion of the Hungarian Catholic Church. Each of their (by now five) urban high schools had been expanding for the last several decades and had received new facilities. Three of them were fully rebuilt, while the other two were remodeled and refurnished. Vocations reached an unprecedented level, providing an average of 15 novices a year. In Budapest, school and parish grew into a unique "symbiosis" combining all features of Catholic life. A group of Cistercians also launched a movement of pastoral care for their alumni. They established residential colleges for university students by founding the "Americana" (Society of St. Emery) to reach out to Catholic college students. In 1942, as World War II was just beginning to wrap Europe in flames, Zirc commemorated the 800th anniversary of the Order's arrival in Hungary. The commemorative volume for the occasion reflects the Abbey's multiple features: monasticism, an educational and cultural apostolate, and a commitment to priestly ministry. How could they know that, in a few short years, the Abbey of Zirc was going to face suppression and, a few years later, the danger of extinction?

The First Formulation of the "American Project" in 1945

Over the course of World War II, Zirc certainly had its share of physical damage, but its losses were comparatively moderate. Although Hungary was coerced into fighting on the side of Nazi Germany, unlike in Germany, priests and monks were not drafted for military service. In Zirc the roof of the abbey's library caved in when a plane crashed into the building and in Székesfehérvár the church lost one of its towers and much of

its roof during the siege of the city. Budapest had also undergone a siege that left many of its historical monuments in ruins. But there the Cistercian residence, school and church suffered only minor hurt. Teaching, suspended in most of the country in October of 1944, resumed in a matter of days as soon as the hostilities ceased. In the fall of 1945 the Cistercian communities were again fully engaged in their ministry, trying to cope with their altered surroundings, and, most importantly, with a thoroughly new political situation which had been created by the war.

At the conclusion of the war in 1944/45, the country was invaded and occupied by the Red Army. The economy was in shambles, the capital in ruins, industrial plants destroyed or dismantled, agricultural production stopped. As a first result of the changes, the Order's possessions — properties of land, received in medieval times for funding monasteries and churches — were confiscated and distributed mostly among poor agricultural workers who aspired to become small landowners in the new, post-war economy. Following the lead of the country's episcopate, the Cistercians accepted the land reform. They hoped that the new leaders of the country would provide alternative ways for supporting the educational institutions funded by the Church's patrimony. There was, in fact, a certain euphoria with which many Catholics were looking forward to a day when a poorer and more evangelical church would emerge from the ashes.

All the more surprising, then, is the letter dated July 19, 1945, that Fr. Louis Lékai, a 29-year old Cistercian priest of the community of Eger, wrote to his friend and former classmate, Fr. Anselm Nagy, who was working at this time in the parish of Előszállás as assistant pastor.

"Dear Anselm! This is our first opportunity to get in touch. We know each other well enough: we know what the two of us hold as essential in life. We have survived the war; for my part I am tempted to add: 'unfortunately.' But we must look forward and do our best with what is left of our lives. We must work and begin to make plans. For my part, I have formed a plan which I have already communicated to our Abbot at his last visit."

"I think that present culture is sometimes hostile to the idea of religious life. It is not just a lack of comprehension, but before they even try to understand it, they are already hostile. What today's culture would be very interested in, I think, would be something part-time: part-time priests, part-time monks. In older times you would very often just say that commitment is essential because everything you do is somehow for the rest of your life. When you take a direction, move in that direction. Today, on the other hand, what is important is to leave every door open. So I think our culture makes this decision to choose a vocation very difficult. There are many open doors available. The options are relatively easy but the decision-making is truly hard. It is very difficult to find the right kind of people who would say, 'Yes, I want to be here and I want to stay here.'"

*Abbot Denis Farkasfahy, O. Cist.
Informer interview, February 1996*

With this dramatic opening, Fr. Louis formulates the outline of a rather adventurous proposal. A group of Hungarian Cistercians must emigrate to America and build a new monastery and school, in order to live and teach according to the original ideal they (he and Anselm) had shared first while in high school and then later as fellow novices in the Cistercian Order. Louis thinks that they should seek out Americans of Hungarian origin who would be able to help them in the first few years of the new foundation. He thinks that the area adjacent to the Great Lakes would provide for them the best opportunities. Although Abbot Wendelin, Louis says further, is backing the project, he wants them to gather more information about how it could be carried out. Louis then refers to a trip that Anselm is planning to make abroad and asks him to collect during this trip more information about the process of immigrating to the USA and starting a life in "the new world." Upon Anselm's return, he proposes that they meet in Budapest to discuss the details of the project. He even suggests August 9 as a date for this meeting.

The letter also ends with a dramatic, one may say, prophetic statement: "I do not want to exaggerate, but one may say that the survival of our community depends on our readiness to work with dedication and diligence for what we set out as our goal."

This letter is the first known document about the project that resulted in the foundation of a Cistercian monastery in the United States by Hungarian monks.

It is perhaps important to halt the narrative for a moment to assess the basic features of this plan in its first formulation. First, the project was based on the assumption that "the way of life" Louis and Anselm wanted to live would soon become impossible in Hungary. This insight is all the more remarkable since at this time hardly anyone thought that in the near future Cistercian life in Hungary would be threatened, or that Catholic schools would be suppressed. In fact, in 1945 (still before the peace treaties concluding the War), most people in Hungary expected the Russian troops to leave within a year.

Second, Fr. Louis speaks of a monastery and a school. In fact, the text of the letter speaks of the two in reverse order: school and monastery. There can be no doubt that he meant a secondary school, similar to the schools the Cistercians owned in Hungary. It does not appear that Fr. Louis had any specific knowledge of American secondary education. He must have assumed that a secondary school like those run in Hungary would be welcome in the United States.

Third, as a monk, Fr. Louis knew that the abbot's approval for the project was essential. He had already stated that he had obtained his abbot's backing. Yet, how strongly did he believe that Abbot Wendelin was, in fact, supportive? A short paragraph of the letter expresses some doubt that the support was enthusiastic. Louis reports that "for the time being" his abbot wants him to become the director of a newly organized boarding school in Eger, a short-lived post-war project that the Cistercians undertook. Louis shows no enthusiasm for his new job as he exclaims: "I and a boarding school! What a 'farce of destiny!'" Apparently, at this point Louis's future was cast into some uncertainty, for he did not believe that his job in Eger would last, nor had his abbot, despite his stated support, give him permission to

pursue his dream of an American foundation.

We do not know if Louis and Anselm did, indeed, see each other in Budapest on August 9. Nor do we know about Anselm's initial response to his friend's invitation to participate in this "outlandish" project. There is only one other fact that stands out as remarkable and turns this letter into a "foundational document" for the Abbey in Texas. Fr. Anselm kept this letter and brought it with him when he left for America. After he became the first superior and abbot of the monastery in Dallas, he inserted it into his office file marked "Fr. Louis" where I found it years after his death; it was, in fact, one of the few personal letters he brought with him from Hungary. He must have considered it as an important and precious document, guiding his life into a new direction.

The First Exodus (1945-1950)

Fr. Louis' letter to his high-school friend was more prophetic than he could have realized. In the next three years life in Hungary became increasingly more difficult for everybody, but especially for the clergy and religious. Two events during this period stood out as decisive in determining the course of events. First, by the end of the school year 1947/48 all religious schools of Hungary (Catholic, Protestant and Jewish) were nationalized: education became by law a function of the Hungarian State. Second, in 1950 most religious orders of men and women were dissolved, their properties confiscated and their members disbanded. Only a small portion of the religious men were allowed to join the diocesan clergy, while the rest, along with all religious women, were forced to disperse into civilian life.

In the first of these two events, all five Cistercian schools were nationalized, while as a result of the second, the Abbey of Zirc was suppressed and all of its 214 members dispersed. The worst possible scenario had become a reality.

While, between 1945 and 1950, the establishment of this new Communist society and state was underway, a chain of separate incidents forced almost 30 members of the Abbey of Zirc to leave the country. The first to leave was Fr. Anselm Nagy, who left without fanfare, but probably with clear objectives formulated by his superiors. While no documents outlining those objectives have yet been found, the facts surrounding their enactment can be easily reconstructed. In the fall of 1945, shortly after he received Fr. Louis' letter, Anselm traveled to Rome, apparently for continued studies. In November he enrolled in the Faculty of Canon Law at the Gregorian University and took up residence at the Generalate of the Order, where he had lived during the war while studying for a doctorate in theology. But all this was only a front. Very soon after Anselm appeared to be settling in to his studies, another Cistercian priest, Fr. Raymund Molnár, joined him in Rome. The two then quickly obtained visas to the US and embarked together on a "liberty ship" bound to Savannah, Georgia. From Savannah they took the train to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and from there they traveled to their final destination, a small Cistercian Abbey, "Our Lady of Spring Bank," in Okauchee, Wisconsin.

The mission of these two priests did not fully match the plans that Fr. Louis had described to his friend in the previous summer. In Louis' plan

the monastery of Spring Bank played no role. Spring Bank was a small, struggling Cistercian foundation, begun in 1928 by an international team of monks recruited by Abbot General Janssens. Their schedule and regimen favored a contemplative lifestyle which offered little prospect for opening a school or for pursuing any direction that might lead to what Fr. Louis had called "the way of life we wanted." Besides, Spring Bank had serious problems to deal with. Due to some feverish activities by its first founders, it had accumulated enormous debts. Then, in 1933, with approximately \$200,000 in unpaid bonds, it went bankrupt. The case was quickly reported to the Holy See, Abbot General Janssens was summoned, and in 1935, by the mandate of the Holy See, he was forced to resign and the Order as a whole to assume all debt accumulated under his tenure. The Holy See threatened as well to consider even more drastic measures unless the Order guaranteed solvency. In 1935 when the Order's leading abbots (the "Definitorium") convened to deal with this emergency, the representatives of the abbot of Zirc intervened and, in order to avoid any further harm to the Order, declared that their monastery was willing to pay off all debt left behind by the Abbot General. The Holy See was satisfied, and a new Abbot General was elected.

The rest of the story, however, is only partially known. From the minutes of the Definitorium it is clear that Zirc considered the payment as a loan and asked for collateral which had, however, at least at this time, nothing to do with the property of Spring Bank. According to these same minutes of the Definitorium, the requested collateral was the title to the Abbot General's residence, a fashionable mansion on the the hill Gianicolo in Rome. Zirc demanded that the title of this property be transferred to its possession. The Definitorium accepted this condition, but the deal was never executed. For years, Zirc paid for the bonds of Spring Bank through a Dutch bank and considered the villa on the Gianicolo as its own, but the title was never transferred. Then, because of the war and the collapse of Holland under Nazi invasion, payments became impossible, communications with America were cut, and all activity got further postponed. Not much could have been left of the debt, because after the war the bonds of Spring Bank are not mentioned again in the correspondence. But now a new problem surfaced. While in the 1930's Zirc was capable of making large payments and could have remained indifferent about the collateral, now, in 1945, deprived of all its possessions, Zirc became highly interested in getting back some compensation for the money spent on the debt of the Order.

It seems that the new Abbot General, Edmondo Bernardini, unwilling to see his own residence put up for sale, struck a deal with Zirc, encouraging the Hungarian Abbey to take over the properties of Spring Bank, revitalize the declining foundation and establish there, in the new world, a financial base for its own operations at home. Thus, in the eyes of the Abbot of Zirc and his counselors, a religious house in America could provide the means to attain several needed goals: a new foundation, a base for obtaining financial help, and a place of refuge for displaced members. Unfortunately, Spring Bank became none of these. Instead, it became what is called in today's political language "a quagmire:" an operation which solves no problems but instead creates new ones and leaves the participants with the sense that there is no way out.

The selection of Frs. Raymund and Anselm to go to America must have happened in 1945 right after the war. Born in 1912, Fr. Raymund was three years older than Fr. Anselm. He had also been a student of theology in Rome. The Abbot of Zirc must have thought that Fr. Raymund's knowledge of foreign languages, his experience living abroad, and the connections he had with Cistercian monasteries outside Hungary qualified him to lead this project. Unfortunately, events proved him to be a weak leader. In the beginning, however, his problems in leadership were complicated by the fact that the objectives of his journey were not very well defined, either. He, along with Fr. Anselm, arrived in a foreign country with little or no knowledge of English. They received some unspecified assignments from the Abbot of Zirc and some general promises from the Abbot General. In Spring Bank they were met with a cool reception.

Soon after the first two "pioneers" arrived in America, others set out to follow them. The first few left the country under reasonably "normal" conditions, meaning that they were able to travel with valid passports and were not stopped at the border. However, one must realize that, in these years after the war, the political conditions in Hungary were far from normal. The country was under Soviet occupation, and, consequently, all public authority functioned in the shadow of a brutal military power. Throughout Germany and Austria, travel was controlled at checkpoints dividing the various zones of occupation by two sets of authorities, civilian and military. At the same time, masses of people were trying to expatriate or to repatriate, moving in and out of the Soviet zone for a variety of reasons. It was a common assumption that in Eastern Europe a hard-line communist takeover was imminent. That was reason enough for a large number of people to travel to the West under a variety of pretexts, yet with no intention of returning. Under such circumstances five members of the Abbey of Zirc left Hungary, planning to emigrate to the United States and join Frs. Anselm and Raymund. They were Louis Lékai, Damian Szödényi, Csaba (George) Ferenczy, Odo Egres and Lambert Simon. They all were in their thirties, and had graduate degrees and a few years of teaching experience in one of the Order's secondary schools. The date of their arrival in America and the first few years of their American lives is a rather complicated story, not to be narrated here. Nevertheless, all five eventually arrived at the monastery of Spring Bank and became part of an unsuccessful effort to turn that place into a monastery dependent on the Abbey of Zirc. With the exception of Fr. Raymund, who in 1963 became the first abbot of Spring Bank, they all became members of the community which founded the monastery of Our Lady of Dallas.

There were some other monks from Zirc, both younger and older, who became part of the foundation for other reasons. The first political refugee, fleeing from religious persecution, was Fr. Thomas Fehér. A priest and teacher in his late thirties, he had had no intention of leaving his native land. But in the first government crack-down on religious orders, in which priests were targeted more or less at random, he was arrested and tried on drummed-up charges as an example of "the reactionary clergy" working against the "democratization" of Hungarian society and spreading false propaganda among the youth. Tried and sentenced in 1948, he was released after three months in prison. But the prosecution had appealed his mild sentence,

and he learned through confidential sources that a tougher sentence, sending him back to prison, was imminent. On the advice of his abbot, Fr. Thomas slipped across the border to Austria. At this time, fortunately, the "iron curtain," with its watch towers and mine fields, had not yet been built.

Quite different reasons brought another group of monks to the West. With the real intention of completing their studies in foreign languages, these young men in their twenties, some of them not even ordained to the priesthood, traveled to various universities in Western Europe. As the suppression of Zirc became imminent, however, they were sent directives by their abbot not to return to Hungary but to remain abroad and eventually join the project of a new foundation in America. They were Fr. Christopher Ráby in Fribourg, Switzerland; Fr. Henry Marton and Fr. Theodosius Demén in Innsbruck, Austria; Fr. John Veréb in Munich, Germany; and Frs. Solutor Marosszéki (Ralph March), Rudolph Zimányi and Balthasar Szarka in Paris, France. As soon as their passports were revoked by the new, communist Hungarian government, each one of them had to ask for asylum in the country of their residence, and thus they became refugees.

There were also some other Cistercians who appeared to leave Hungary temporarily but became refugees by subsequent events. Some of these never came to Dallas and thus will not be listed here. However, back in 1950, all these persons (about eighteen altogether) became part of the same exiled community, cut off from their home base, and thus shared the same destiny. As the iron curtain closed, they were left to their own financial and intellectual resources.

The decree of suppression issued in August of 1950 created the last and largest group of expatriates. The Abbey itself was supposed to be vacated by October 15, at which time, with all operations ceasing, an inventory was to be presented to the state authorities. With the prospects of a hopeless future in Hungary, a plan was hatched which had far-reaching consequences for the members of Zirc both at home and abroad. With the permission of the abbot, one of the younger seminarians whose home was in the immediate vicinity of the Austrian border devised a way of escaping into Austria. By now, September of 1950, the border was sealed by minefields, electric wires, watchtowers and regiments of armed guards who had orders "to shoot to kill" anyone attempting to cross illegally. Crossing this border was nearly impossible. During the year 1950 hundreds of people were either arrested or killed in the attempt.

This dismal fact was surely known to those 22 monks of Zirc, most in their early twenties, who volunteered to join the expedition of an organized escape across the border that separated East from West. Nineteen of them were in their early years of seminary training, and two were young priests. All preparations were made in secrecy. They were not even allowed to say good-bye to their parents. Few of them knew that the two men waiting for them at a railroad station close to the border were border guards in disguise. For a good sum of money, they volunteered to cut the electric wires of the mine field and lead them, one by one, across the mine field in the middle of the night. In spite of all the risks involved, the adventure was apparently successful. By sunrise, covered with mud, exhausted from exertion and fear, the group gathered on the other side of the border and marched

into the first Austrian village, where they planned to catch a bus and be, within an hour, in Vienna. They did not realize that a major threat was still waiting. A narrow strip of eastern Austria was under Soviet occupation. In the village the refugees looked for the rectory of the Catholic parish where they asked for food and assistance. Afterwards, they split into smaller groups. As the first eight boarded a bus bound for Vienna, they were arrested by the Austrian police, who, following procedures strictly enforced by the Soviet Army, returned them to Hungary. By the end of November, they had been sentenced to 4-7 years of imprisonment. Furthermore, to the occupying Soviet authorities, their attempt to escape was just one more ground for sentencing their abbot, who was to be arrested shortly after the suppression of his monastery.

The rest of the escapees, thirteen people in all, were more fortunate. Divided into two groups, they managed to move out of the village and to travel by train to the Austrian capital. As was true of the whole of Austria, Vienna was, at this time, divided into four sectors: American, Soviet, English and French (as well as Berlin and all of Germany). From there they traveled to Graz, which lay in the English sector, then on to Innsbruck, and finally, to the Cistercian monastery of Stams, where they were given kind hospitality. With asylum granted and their status as refugees recognized, they managed to travel to Italy and moved into the newly built Generalate of the Order. Here they were able to resume their studies for the priesthood. Out of these 13 men, the following eventually came to Texas and became members of Our Lady of Dallas: Benedict Monostori, Aloysius Kimecz, Moses Nagy, David Balás, Philip Szeitz, Daniel Csányi, and Melchior Chladek. Polycarp Zakar, also part of this group, spent the next 45 years in Rome, where he was eventually elected Abbot General of the Order (1985-1995) and, afterwards,



The 1963 General Chapter of the Cistercians in Stams, Austria, elevating the monastery of Dallas to the rank of an abbey.

became the first freely elected abbot of Zirc since Abbot Wendelin. Six years after this successful escape, during the upheavals of the revolution of 1956, two of those eight who had been captured and returned to Hungary, managed to escape a second time. One of these, Fr. Pascal Kis-Horváth, came to Dallas soon thereafter; the other, Fr. Louis' younger brother, Emery Lékai, also lived in Dallas for a few years.

The Fate of the Suppressed Abbey of Zirc and the Formation of a Community Abroad

On October 15, 1950, a little less than 800 years after its first beginnings (1182) and almost exactly 250 years after its second foundation (1699), the Abbey of Zirc ceased to exist as a community and a religious institution. The Communist authorities delayed the actual take-over of the Abbey by more than a week. The massive complex of centuries-old, baroque buildings, vacated of its inhabitants by the established deadline, stood empty and forlorn for almost ten days. Only the abbot and his secretary lived in the building, waiting in anxious silence for the inevitable termination of their monastery. The villagers were puzzled, seeing the lights of the church turned on every night. Sneaking through the front doors, several of the curious found the two monks going through interminable prayers, crying aloud, lying prostrate in tears, moving from altar to altar, visiting the tombs of the ancient abbots, holding onto the choir stalls and touching the medieval stones framed into the 18th century walls. Abbot Wendelin and his secretary, Fr. Timothy, readied themselves for the closure of the monastery in the spirit of men who had been condemned to die. Finally, on October 22, a committee made up both of party officials from Budapest and of local policemen abruptly entered the monastery and ordered the abbot to hand over the keys, sign hastily drawn up documents and then, unceremoniously, to leave. In a small car, the abbot and his secretary drove themselves to Budapest and found lodging in the guest rooms of the Central Seminary. Three days later, while driving to the home of a close relative of the Abbot, they were first detained and then arrested. After severe torture and solitary confinement, the abbot was sentenced to fifteen years of imprisonment.

By this time thirty-two of the monks once housed at Zirc found themselves abroad, evenly divided between Europe and the US. Although legally they all belonged to the same monastic community, many of them had never met. The youngest had just finished their novitiates, while the oldest were approaching sixty years of age. By this time, some had lived abroad for several years, while others had just begun an existence outside the homeland. Yet all were painfully aware that it would be a long time before they could return to Hungary.

For those who had been sent to America by their abbot with the task of "taking over" the monastery of Spring Bank, the task only grew more arduous and confusing. The original members of Spring Bank, few in number but established in their way of life, at first were reluctant to surrender their institution to the newcomers. They were also anxious to explain that their monastery was the wrong place for starting a community involved in education. More serious, however, than the immediate problems of Spring Bank was the problem that the thirty-some monks scattered over the Western hemisphere lacked a framework of established leadership. A few months before

the suppression, Abbot Wendelin had formally appointed Fr. Raymund both as Prior of Spring Bank and as his vicar for all those outside of Hungary, but his actual jurisdiction in Spring Bank itself remained unclear for quite a while. Fr. Raymund's non-assertive personality also aggravated the situation. Had he been able to establish his authority more forcefully, perhaps he could have become the gathering force for this community which was dispersed over two continents.

Those who had recently arrived in America were faced with immense difficulties. First, they were rather overwhelmed by the task of learning a new language and of immersing themselves into "the new culture," which included the life and spirit of American Catholicism. Second, they were deeply divided among themselves about the future: how were they to transplant their old way of life, learned in Hungary, into this new soil? Third, the financial problems were also immense. The majority of the refugees were not "employable" either as priests or as teachers. More than half of them had not yet finished their studies and were in no position to support themselves, much less anyone else. All attempts to recover at least some of the money Zirc had possessed abroad had tragically failed. It is unfortunate yet perhaps understandable that, under the present circumstances, neither the Abbot General nor Spring Bank acknowledged any indebtedness for the generosity with which Zirc had taken care of the bankruptcy in 1933.

These chaotic conditions, which reigned among the refugees in the early fifties, were aggravated by a crisis, one that came about in the governance of the Cistercian Order during these same years. In 1950, on account of ill health, Abbot General Edmondo Bernardini resigned. His successor, Abbot Matthaeus Quatember, began with great zeal several projects, including his own plan of resurrecting Spring Bank and gathering there the monks of Zirc. Soon, however, he also became ill with cancer and failed to carry his plans to completion before his death in 1953.

The situation of the new "community," created by emigration and escape, was indeed precarious. First, some of the members living in Spring Bank tried to find an accommodation by which Spring Bank could become their new home. When Fr. Anselm Nagy was made novice master in Spring Bank, a good number of novices entered, raising the hope that from them as well as from the gathering together of all the other Hungarian members, a new American community could be formed. But most of the refugees despaired about the future of Spring Bank and began to explore various other possibilities. There was as well the pressing need for employment. Some accepted parochial jobs, while others began teaching at Catholic colleges or high schools. A few (Frs. Damian and Louis among them) moved to Buffalo, N.Y., while another group moved into a suburban house in Milwaukee, working either on various assignments in the diocese or on finishing a degree at Marquette University.

As early as 1949, Fr. Louis initiated a systematic search to find an appropriate new location for the kind of new monastery of which he had dreamed from the very beginning. He persuaded Fr. Anselm to join him on a nationwide trip in search of a hospitable bishop and diocese. The two drove from city to city, inquiring about the possibilities for a new monastic foundation that would combine the exercise of the priesthood with teaching in



A group of Sisters of St. Mary of Namur attending the first dedication of the monastery in 1958.

college or high school. Their most significant initial contact was made in San Diego, their most serious choice before their decision to move to Dallas.

Contact with the diocese of Dallas and its bishop, Thomas K. Gorman, came about quite by accident. In 1951, one of the members, Fr. George Ferenczy, who was working on his education in music, was offered a scholarship for a summer workshop at Northwestern Texas University in Wichita Falls. There he came in contact with a group of the Sisters of Saint Mary of Namur, a religious congregation well established in Texas, who ran schools at various places including Dallas, Fort Worth, and Wichita Falls. The sisters talked to him about their plan of turning their small junior college, Our Lady of Victory in Fort Worth, into a co-educational college which would eventually, they hoped, become a major Catholic university for the region. This plan was the nucleus from which the project of the University of Dallas eventually developed. The first casual and informal invitation to join this project appeared to the Cistercians as a ray of hope in their newly launched American journey.

The Project of Moving to Dallas

The Sisters of St. Mary of Namur had come to Texas in the 19th century with a missionary purpose. The arrival of the first three sisters in Waco on July 24, 1874, marked the beginning of many apostolic activities, most of them in parochial schools. But, as with most activities on the frontier, the beginnings were quite difficult. So few was the number of Catholics in the area (there were only twenty-five Catholic families in Waco) that when the sisters organized their first high mass only eight people attended. Discouraged by the slow beginnings, they had decided to leave when yellow fever broke out in the neighbouring settlements and a quarantine was imposed. Two of the sisters became ill, but survived the disease. As the quarantine was lifted and they were again free to travel, their attitude changed. They

came to realize that God's will was for them to remain and found a house. Though such an ambitious undertaking presented many obstacles, they eventually succeeded in building their first institutions and recruiting their first local vocations. The sisters began operating a whole network of convents, with houses in Waco, Corsicana, Denison, Fort Worth, and Dallas. Eventually, a whole province was founded with a mother house in Fort Worth.

The boom in vocations that followed World War II brought many talented women into the ranks of this congregation. Encouraged by their increased numbers and using Our Lady of Victory, their small junior college in Fort Worth, for the formation of the young nuns, the sisters began to dream big, formulating plans for the expansion of the junior college into a four-year, coeducational university. Their plans were well advanced when the sisters learned about the Hungarian Cistercians, a group of religious desperately looking for a place where they would be welcome as teachers, priests and monks. To realize their dream of founding a coeducational college, the sisters certainly needed an order of men to share the burden and responsibility of the new institution. The European background, the youth, and the monastic spirituality of the Cistercians impressed the sisters as dynamic and promising. They were also keenly aware that their own congregation had been founded in Belgium right after the French Revolution by a Cistercian priest, Fr. Nicholas Joseph Minsart. He, too, had been forced out of his original vocation by the suppression of his monastery. Though he joined the diocesan clergy, he remained in his heart a religious and a Cistercian, and it was with such an ideal that he founded several religious congregations, among them the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur. The sisters saw in these parallels a sure sign, one promising good things to come from their association with the Cistercian expatriates.

The two religious communities "hit it off" quite successfully. The sisters found the refugee priests quite "in tune" with their needs. Decades later they recalled their first years of cooperation as a golden era of renewal, bringing new stimulation in the areas of spirituality and pedagogy, and, most importantly, in theology. Both groups, looking for encouragement, support and respect for their intellectual and spiritual aspirations, found in the other a certain spontaneous reciprocity. The Hungarian priests were badly deficient in their command of English, while the sisters, with their roots in Belgium, wanted to follow more closely a European model in their intellectual and spiritual ambitions. A few common programs and teaching assignments at various locations in North Texas quickly convinced the sisters that the monks could offer much help for their project of the new "University of Dallas."

For awhile, however, both orders struggled with their own internal problems. In remarkably similar ways, both had major problems with their own General Superiors and had to survive an institutional crisis before any substantial resources became available to them for the new project. It is not our task to describe how the Sisters of Saint Mary clarified their project with the Belgian General Superior and obtained finally both her support and that of Thomas K. Gorman, the bishop of Dallas-Ft. Worth. The support of Bishop Gorman was, of course, essential for both groups. As the local ordinary, the Bishop had the ultimate say-so in launching the project of a Catholic university. Equally important was the backing of the Bishop for lining up the

necessary financial support for the new university. In addition, the Cistercians needed the Bishop's invitation into his diocese. All this appears to have been obtained relatively easily. An active supporter of Catholic schools, Bishop Gorman was delighted to see the prospect of 20-30 priests joining the clergy of his diocese and was eager to turn the project of the University of Dallas into his own. In fact, the project became a diocesan one and began mushrooming way beyond the original perspective, and means, of the Sisters of St. Mary.

More complex was the inner situation of the Cistercian group. Several of the members had little or no interest in going down to Texas, leaving behind either Spring Bank, or some locale in Europe or wherever else they had found a temporary home. Opinions were divided, or in fact outright antagonistic about the future of Spring Bank. Some still believed in staying in Spring Bank, in order to be connected with a new contemplative orientation. Fr. Raymund, by now acting as prior of Spring Bank, was himself of the opinion that the new monastery sponsored by Zirc in America should be more contemplative in nature, and that the educational apostolate of the community could be postponed or relinquished. But the final thrust that moved the refugees to Dallas came from the new Abbot General, Sighard Kleiner, whose canonical visitation to Spring Bank in 1953 created a radically new set of circumstances.

Abbot Sighard, previously the founder and superior of the Swiss monastery, Hauterive, was a rigid champion of the contemplative ideal within the Cistercian Order. He entertained high hopes that during his visitation he could resolve all pending issues in Spring Bank so that, at the end, the Hungarian refugees would fit into a future designed by his guidelines. Shortly after his election, he set out for Spring Bank. The visitation lasted two months and ended in a confrontation between the visitor and the majority of the refugees who regarded his actions as harsh and, ultimately, illegal, violating both the spirit and letter of their own constitutions. The ripple effects of the visitation resulted in multiple conflicts within the community and caused much pain and confusion. What was not seen at the time, however, was the fact that the rough procedures by an inexperienced visitor and the high level of frustration reached during the power struggle providentially paved the road to Dallas. The final consequence of the Abbot General's visitation was that the majority of the members were forced to leave behind their first dreams and depart for Texas.

In his Chart of Visitation dated Christmas of 1953, the Abbot General imposed a daily schedule that made the work of education (either in college or in secondary school) totally impossible. This new way of life he imposed included manual labor combined with some priestly ministry but no significant intellectual work or educational apostolate. The minutes of the meeting in which the community confronted the Abbot General show deep mistrust between the community and the visitor, with no hope for a compromise. The last question asked at the meeting by Fr. Anselm was an expression of the feeling that the Abbot General, acting as "apostolic visitor," was proceeding in violation of the community's own constitutions:

"How do you justify your regulations in view of our constitutions [i.e. the constitutions of Zirc] approved by the Holy See?"

"I will reply to you in private," the Abbot General responded, and abruptly adjourned the meeting.

In his Visitation Chart the Abbot General did offer those unwilling to follow his regulations the possibility of leaving the monastery for another place, "possibly Dallas," where they could form a new community. But he offered only minimal concessions for this group. While they might live elsewhere, they were not to expect to have the right of opening a new independent monastery or of erecting a house for the novitiate without his consent. Consequently, when he returned to Rome, he left behind a community in turmoil, struggling with enormous problems.

Six weeks after the visitation, when the dust had settled, on Feb. 2 and 3, 1954, the council of the community met in Spring Bank to decide what to do. The Prior, Fr. Raymund Molnár, greeted the members and then read a prepared statement in which he defended the Abbot General's actions, asking everyone to cooperate and obey. Finally, he excused himself from the rest of the meeting, delegated the presidency of the meeting to Fr. Anselm, and left the room. With this action he practically withdrew from his position of leadership over any person who did not wish to accept the way of life imposed by the Abbot General. In fact, he stated that he had explicitly offered the Abbot General his resignation from his office as vicar of the Abbot of Zirc, but for the time being this resignation was not accepted.

Practically speaking, it was at this moment that Fr. Anselm began his career of thirty-four years as a religious superior. His debut was cautious, even timid. He first summarized the recent events and then outlined four possible courses of action for the future: first, gather all members in Spring Bank and try to combine the statutes of the Visitation with some teaching activity; second, move to Dallas, find employment in teaching, and start a monastery; third, send a few people to Dallas to explore the possibilities spoken of by the Sisters of St. Mary and by the Diocese, but postpone any decision for one year; or fourth, retain the ties with Spring Bank, but allow individuals to take up temporary employment elsewhere in the vicinity.

Following this outline of proposals, Fr. Louis, using a prepared statement, addressed the meeting. He began by stating that the visitation had been held in flagrant violation of the Constitutions of Zirc. His words were bitter. All that had happened, he continued, was possible only because Zirc had been suppressed and its abbot imprisoned, thus leaving defenseless the monks of Zirc who had emigrated. He read excerpts from a letter written by Abbot Wendelin in 1948 which clearly showed that he, as their abbot, never envisaged a change in their way of life but rather had intended them to continue in America the same way of life they had led in Hungary: "My intention is that you transplant the vocation of the Hungarian Cistercians to Spring Bank or elsewhere so that it may take root in American soil. Not for a minute should you forget the *finis specialis* of our congregation, which consists of an educational apostolate."

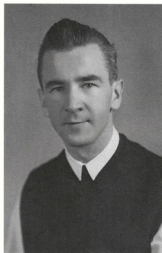
The visitation of Abbot Sighard was, Fr. Louis continued, the end result of "a silent revolution" that had gone on for several years and had so undermined the community's basic sense of purpose that a radically new orientation had ensued. On the other hand, Fr. Louis had serious reservations about a new foundation in Dallas. Such an enterprise stood no chance unless

the Abbot General explicitly changed his position on four issues: First, a new superior should be appointed in agreement with the wishes of the majority; second, the new foundation must be based on the constitutions of Zirc; third, he should permit that the new monastery be independent and self-governing (*sui iuris*); fourth, he should allow the new community to admit novices.

Unless the Abbot General made concessions on all these points, Fr. Louis argued, any attempt at a new foundation would be doomed. Penniless and with no support from their General Superior, the refugees of Zirc would not otherwise be able to survive as a community. In Dallas or elsewhere, "we would be considered a bunch of rebels punished and condemned to go extinct." Fr. Louis concluded his passionate speech by addressing the question of responsibility. "Finally," he said, "I would like to respond to a possible objection. What if these four conditions do not come about? How will they who refuse now to take responsibility for a new foundation face their responsibility for so many young members who would doubtlessly end in dispersion? My answer is the following: responsibility for the dispersion of the Fathers with all its evil consequences should not go to those who have been victimized by these circumstances but exclusively to those who made these circumstances come about."

In spite of its compelling logic and forceful rhetoric, the rest of the members did not agree with Fr. Louis's statement. Instead, a spirit of compromise and caution prevailed. Fr. Lambert, Fr. Damian, Fr. Thomas and Fr. Christopher took the floor, one by one. Each of them asked for caution and moderation. They pointed out that they could not support any movement which allowed an abdication of their responsibility. They had to make every effort, they thought, to keep the community which had, in fact, already begun to disperse, from completely falling apart. The Chart of Visitation itself, they went on, did offer the option of starting a new monastery in Dallas, but they should not be too rigid about their future way of life. After all, back in Hungary, the lifestyle and the schedule of each house was somewhat different. In their eyes there was every hope that gradually and in due time the four conditions listed by Fr. Louis could be obtained. A good beginning would be to replace Fr. Raymund with a new superior to whom the Abbot General should delegate his powers "*pro tempore*." This man could then begin negotiating about their new foundation in Dallas. Before adjourning this historic February 2 meeting, by secret ballot the members of the community elected Fr. Anselm as the person whom the Abbot General should appoint as their new superior. They decided to ask both Fr. Raymund and the Abbot General to delegate their powers over the community to Fr. Anselm. In this way, the monks unwilling to remain in Spring Bank became a unit independent of the monastery of Spring Bank and capable of functioning on its own.

The choice of Fr. Anselm as superior was a fortunate one. He was still young. The day before his election he had just completed his 39th year of age. His degree in theology from the Angelicum in Rome and his master's degree in mathematics, close to completion at Marquette University, represented a good balance in his educational background. In Hungary, for two years he had helped with the administration of the Abbey's goods, thereby gaining some understanding of the financial tasks that lay ahead.



Fr. Anselm shortly after his arrival in the United States.

As a man of cautious views and long-standing commitments, he quickly adapted to the role he was to play during the next several decades. He knew that he had no choice but to cooperate with the Abbot General. It always remained his policy to seek the good will of all authorities he had to face. Nonetheless, he demonstrated tenacity in his goal-setting and remained faithful to his principles and objectives. He was personally convinced that there were many ways of accommodating the demands imposed by Abbot Sighard without compromising the community's apostolate and traditions. He probably understood quite well Abbot Sighard's legalistic mind, framed as it was in preoccupations with monastic observances, customs, and external regulations. Yet, he also knew that, because of their educational background and national culture, the majority of the Hungarian priests had little or no understanding of or patience for this rigid, Swiss-German mentality. Furthermore, Fr. Anselm himself had a number of personal characteristics that made him appear a fair match for the Abbot General even on his own terms: his own mind was trained in a rigid and formalistic tradition of scholastic philosophy and theology, a rigor which his mathematical formation reinforced and gave some additional secular veneer. He had a great interest in canon law and was always inclined to deal with issues in terms of definitions and deductive arguments.

As the events leading to the foundation of Our Lady of Dallas began to unfold, the relationship of Abbot Sighard and Fr. Anselm became increasingly friendly and their cooperation fruitful. Over the next thirty years they learned to appreciate each other to the extent that their exchange was not only more cordial in style but became, in fact, mutually supportive. Both, during their lifetimes, were exposed to a great deal of criticism, witnessed

many setbacks, even failures, and learned the art of compromise for the sake of avoiding further failures.

Setting Up the New Foundation

During the next three years, events led, in quick succession, to the actual foundation of Our Lady of Dallas. During the year 1954, the outlines of the future monastery began to crystalize. It was still hoped that the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur were, indeed, going to open a coeducational four-year college in Dallas. It was in this perspective that in the spring of 1954, the Sisters invited three Cistercians to teach in their schools: one in Our Lady of Good Counsel (OLGC, later supplanted by Bishop Dunne High School), and two in Our Lady of Victory (OLV) in Fort Worth. Further jobs were offered to the Cistercian priests at various parishes of the metropolitan area: St. Bernard's, Sacred Heart Cathedral, St. Edward's, and St. Cecilia's. Several members (Frs. George, Thomas, Odo, Damian, Christopher, and Lambert) immediately moved to Dallas to begin teaching in the fall of 1954. They quickly obtained the support not only of the sisters but also of the local clergy. In great need of more priests, the bishop readily allowed the Cistercians to enter his diocese and offered them, as a temporary home, the residence on Swiss Avenue of his predecessor, Bishop Lynch. In October, Fr. Anselm sent a letter to Mr. Thomas Unis, the attorney of the Diocese of Dallas-Ft. Worth, asking him to arrange the incorporation of "The Cistercian Monastery Our Lady of Dallas."

On December 27, 1954, Fr. Anselm and his council met in Dallas for the first time. The first day's meeting was held in the Wynnewood Hotel, and continued on the following day in the rectory of St. Cecilia, a parish in Oak Cliff. The minutes radiate a good deal of optimism: eight to ten of the Fathers would be teaching in the college to be opened in the next fall by the sisters, while other members would teach in the two high schools that the Bishop was soon to open. In addition, it was reported that the pastor of St. Bernard's parish, Msgr. Wiewell, also had plans to open a "co-institutional" high school in which the Cistercians would have a significant role and would, in fact, lead the boys' section. Practical details were also discussed about the new residence on Swiss Avenue, and Fr. Anselm was charged to reach formal agreements with the Bishop. Finally, plans for a new monastery building, with accommodations for twenty, were discussed, and documents were signed for the new corporation named "Cistercian Monastery Our Lady of Dallas" which was then to be registered with the state of Texas on March 25, 1955.

On February 15, an agreement concerning the occupancy of a "Cistercian Temporary Residence" on Swiss Avenue was signed, and the first three residents to move into the house were Frs. Damian, Thomas, and Odo. (At this time Fr. Anselm was still residing at Spring Bank.) The first installment of the rent was \$125.00, prepaid on February 7.

The next meeting of the Council was held in this residence on April 22, 1955. The topic of the meeting indicated unwelcome news: the Sisters of St. Mary had decided to back out of their plan to open a college. They would like, however, to see the Cistercians take over the project. Quite understandably, the council was reluctant to accept the offer and decided to "wait and see," hoping that the diocesan bishop would take over the

sponsorship of the project.

On May 19, 1955, an "open house" was held in the "temporary residence," an event which the community considers the official beginning of a Cistercian house in Texas. Elsewhere, at about the same time, two official documents of major importance were being signed. Concerning the first, on February 18, the Holy See granted permission for a dependent monastery of the Cistercian Order to be opened in the Diocese of Dallas. The Abbot General transmitted this document, along with his own agreement, dated symbolically for March 21, 1955, the feast of St. Benedict, the assumed date for the foundation of the monastery of Citeaux and, thereby, the Cistercian Order. Concerning the second document, three months later, on June 22, 1955, the Holy See finally appointed Fr. Anselm as the "Vicar of the Abbot of Zirc" with "ordinary jurisdiction" over all (by then 26) monks of Zirc living both outside of Hungary and outside of Spring Bank.

This official acknowledgment is a significant step on a long journey. From now on, Fr. Anselm's jurisdiction was based not merely on the good graces of the Abbot General, but on a papal decree and was, therefore, beyond challenge. An official list of the members of the community was then added to the minutes of the Superior's Council. The 26 names on the official list did not represent, however, the actual (future) community of Dallas. Only nine of them were then in Dallas, though another seven would arrive there eventually as members of "Our Lady of Dallas." Thus, for the time being, only sixteen of the future members were available for moving to Dallas to live in the new monastery.

During the academic year of 1955-1956, major decisions concerning the future of the University of Dallas were being made. Bishop Gorman and a group of priests and laymen, as his Board of Trustees, did take official charge of the project. The Cistercian community then began negotiations with the board for a grant of land. Their request was two-fold: that there be enough land to offer some sense of seclusion for their monastery, and that it be in close proximity to the new university. To their first request for fifty acres, the Bishop and his lay advisors responded by offering ten. Fr. Anselm then took on the difficult task of explaining that the house his community was about to build would not be a mere residence for priests to teach at the University, but a monastery with facilities for novices and seminary students, a church, and even a secondary school, all of which would be combined eventually with a parish. The bishop responded by pointing out that the Jesuit High School in Dallas needed less than ten acres. Undeterred, Fr. Anselm relentlessly argued for the acceptance of his request based on the traditions of the Order, and the nature of a monastic establishment, especially in its need for space and privacy. He then lowered his request to 40 acres, to which the bishop at first agreed, but then lowered the offer to 35. In the end, he delivered only 34 acres, of which 19 acres are in a flood plain and unfit for development.

During these negotiations, construction was begun on the first university buildings and continued through the summer of 1956. On June 23, 1956, Fr. Anselm signed the first contract of the Cistercians with the University of Dallas. On September 27, 1956, as the University of Dallas opened its doors, eight Cistercians were on its faculty. Some lived on campus, others on

Swiss Avenue. Their names are as follows:

Fr. Anselm Nagy (+1988)
Fr. Damian Szödényi
Fr. Louis Lékai (+1994)
Fr. George Ferenczy
Fr. Odo Egres (+1979)
Fr. Thomas Fehér (+1984)
Fr. Christopher Rábay
Fr. Theodosius Demén

In the fall of 1956, a lot of 34 acres was deeded to the Cistercians. Adams & Adams, the same architectural firm which designed Carpenter Hall and the first dorms of the university, was given the assignment to draw up the plans for the new monastery. Fr. Anselm, thinking that such a plan would meet the needs of the small community for at least a few years, was satisfied with a house of 15 rooms for the individual monks, a small chapel, refectory, kitchen and a modest office space. But once again, history would take a new turn.

The Second Exodus

While the first group of refugees were scrambling through their multiple efforts to reach a safe haven and establish a stable home abroad, in Hungary the Cistercians, scattered by their suppression and left without a leader, began their long journey of institutional survival under persecution.

The first year following the suppression, 1950-1951, was characterized by a high degree of naiveté. During that time, the whole novitiate of 21 novices took lodging in Budapest, moving into various apartments and annexes connected with chapels and churches managed by Cistercians. The new superior, Prior Regent Lawrence Sigmond, hoping to keep his activities as secret as possible, held private meetings with his monks and novices in the confessional of a Budapest church. However, he must have known that among many other acts of espionage directed toward religious establishments, his confessional was closely watched and his visitors tabulated. Most of the junior monks entered those diocesan seminaries in which the bishops (for awhile still in office) allowed members of religious orders to form special subgroups. Those newly ordained to the priesthood joined the diocesan clergy and obtained pastoral appointments. Those with graduate degrees looked for teaching positions and began working as lay teachers.

This first "accommodation," however, did not last long. In the spring of 1951 the persecution of the church escalated. Most diocesan bishops were arrested or put under house arrest. Deputies of the government moved into all diocesan chancelleries and began controlling every feature of church life. Seminarians who had previously belonged to religious orders were summarily dismissed. Most ex-religious teaching in high schools lost their jobs. Soon the only "safe jobs" they could hold were the menial ones, especially if held at a safe distance from Budapest and under the auspices of a benevolent party official. Priests serving in the ranks of the diocesan clergy were quickly

demoted, becoming sacristans, organists, or maintenance workers. In the 1950's it was not unusual to see the "maintenance man" of a church celebrate his private mass at a side altar in the early hours while doing menial jobs for the rest of the day. More alarming was the increase in the number of priests put in prison on drummed-up charges. In the 1950's political prisoners were often physically tortured and psychologically debilitated until they reached a point where they declared themselves willing to return to "normal life" in order to become informants on behalf of the government.

Such brutal events victimized some and intimidated others. Yet, thankfully, a few felt prompted to form an underground network of formation and ministry, and even went so far as to recruit new membership for a clandestine novitiate. This underground church did eventually obtain the title of a "church in silence" and remained for nearly twenty years the stronghold of resistance against communism.

Hungarian society adjusted poorly to communist oppression. On March 4, 1953, when the dictator Stalin died, signs of rebellion within the communist camp itself began to surface. The regime opted for liberalization which, in turn, brought a measure of relief to the church. But the respite produced even more unrest and pushed the Communist Party toward a cross-roads. The hard-liners demanded more "discipline:" more arrests, less tolerance for dissenters, and harder policies against the Catholic Church. The liberals voiced their hope for a "communism with a human face" and spoke further of a Christian/Marxist dialogue. These changes led to various events of upheaval in three countries: Poland, East Germany and Hungary. In Hungary unrest quickly led to armed revolt. The outbreaks began on October 23, 1956 when students and workers staged massive demonstrations demanding more democratic reforms. A hapless government lined up the Hungarian army against the demonstrators. The army sided with the demonstrators and, instead of shooting at them, gave over their arms. The rebels, now armed, began to invade government buildings in the attempt to seize power. The communist leadership then called on Soviet troops to intervene. Budapest became the scene of bloody battles for several days. After heavy losses, to the surprise of the country, and of the world, the Soviet troops backed out and announced a cease-fire. Once a new Hungarian government had been installed, the Russians began to negotiate a general withdrawal of their troops from the country. Meanwhile, as the hopes of the insurrectionists ran high and a chaotic instability reigned, thousands of new Soviet troops secretly moved into the country. In the early hours of November 4, the Soviet Army launched an attack. Within a day the revolution was over. By nightfall Soviet troops had entered every government building. A new pro-Soviet government was formed. The former Hungarian secret police came out of hiding and began arresting and executing the leaders of the revolution. Masses of refugees started a long, sad exodus across the Austrian border. (Austria had become one year earlier an independent and free western country.) By Christmas of 1956 more than 200,000 refugees, mostly young men and women, had left the country, thereby completing its devastation.

During the revolution, all political prisoners had been freed, and among them were a dozen Cistercian priests. After 6 years of solitary confinement, Abbot Wendelin emerged from prison. He literally looked like a



Abbot Wendelin in his study in Pannonhalma, Hungary, 1973.

ghost: the tall, vigorous and corpulent man was reduced to a broken figure in a sickly body. But his mind and character were intact. He assembled his closest co-workers and made a few important decisions. Those who were in danger of being arrested again, he sent abroad, to join the brothers in America. A number of young recruits, who had made their novitiate during the years of the oppression, were encouraged to expatriate for the sake of studies in the hope of a happy return in future years.

Before Christmas of 1956 fourteen Cistercians, eight seminary students in their twenties and six priests, crossed over the Austrian border to join the exiles in the West. Of these ten eventually arrived in Dallas: Leonard Barta, Gilbert Hardy, Emery Lékai, Pascal Kis-Horváth, Matthew Kovács, Emilian Novák, Roch Kereszty, Aurel Mensáros, Julius Lelöczky and Denis Farkasfalvy. They ranged in age from 20 to 60. The country they left behind had once again fallen into ruin and under oppression. Abbot Wendelin's own decision to stay in Hungary irrevocably fixed his destiny. Refusing to flee abroad, he chose to remain with the majority of his flock, though they were now dispersed all over Hungary. As the communist regime regained its power, he voluntarily surrendered to the police and was returned to jail. They kept him incarcerated for another year, and then for twenty-four more years he lived under house arrest in the Benedictine monastery of Pannonhalma. Though he lived but 30 miles from Zirc, he was never again allowed to see his abbey. In 1981, when the news of his death became public, the authorities permitted his burial in the abbatial church of Zirc, alongside the tombs of his predecessors, in the presence of whom over 30 years earlier he had spent his last anxious, prayerful nights in the Abbey.

The newly exiled members first gathered in the splendid Austrian monastery of Heiligenkreuz. The hospitality of the Austrians was overwhelm-

ing. Still carrying vivid memories of the Soviet occupation, the Austrian people in general and the local Cistercians in particular, helped the refugees with heartfelt care, deep sympathy and moving compassion. But the wider world, shaken by these heroic and tragic events, was most generous in providing material and moral support for these homeless. The first 100,000 exiles easily obtained their papers of immigration. The Cistercians chose to move to Italy. For the time being, they gathered in Rome under the auspices of the Abbot General. Those monks from Zirc already in Dallas were both shocked and joyful. The community soon grew by more than a dozen new members, all of them young. Once again the youngest members were barely 20 years old. During the course of these great changes, Fr. Anselm undoubtedly realized two things: first, for another decade or two he had enough young people to populate his new foundation; and second, Our Lady of Dallas would need to be twice as large as originally planned.

The First Buildings of the Monastery

By the end of 1956 a sizable community belonged, one way or another, to the foundation under the leadership of Fr. Anselm. Yet this community was still scattered and in a somewhat chaotic condition. Almost twenty of its members remained in Europe, while another twenty or so had found their way to the U. S. While some were already in Dallas, others were in various other places, studying at one university or another. Fourteen of those in Europe had just recently emigrated from Hungary, and had never even met Fr. Anselm, their new superior. Another four were young priests, ordained in 1954 and 1955, who were still writing dissertations and preparing for their doctorates. Their commitment to the foundation in Dallas was vague, nor was it clear to them what jobs they might hold there. Three other members in Europe were elderly refugees: their coming to Dallas was more a problem than a project. Finally, two priests were asked to remain in Rome and work for the Abbot General. One of them, Fr. Polycarp Zakar, later became Abbot General (1985-1995), then was elected Abbot of Zirc and returned to Hungary. The other, Fr. Blaise Füz, joined the community of Spring Bank and became abbot there (1989-1997).

The members of the community living in the USA outside of Dallas



First wing of the monastery viewed from the north (the present courtyard), 1958.

were all planning to move to Dallas and be part of the new foundation. In view of the employment offered by the newly founded University of Dallas, efforts were made within the community to obtain as many graduate degrees as possible: Fr. Benedict Monostori began studies in physics at Fordham, Fr. Rudolph Zimányi in French at Marquette, Fr. Bede Lackner in history at Fordham, Fr. Moses Nagy in French in Quebec, Canada, Fr. Aloysius Kimecz in Spanish in Puerto Rico. Some of the scattered, however, never made it to Dallas. Three joined various dioceses and two left the priesthood. For the time being only ten members ended up in Dallas, eight of whom became members of the University's faculty.

By this time, Fr. Anselm had finally in his possession all the legal entitlements necessary to be the superior and leader of this community. In 1955, he himself left Spring Bank and moved into the Swiss Avenue residence in Dallas. He successfully completed the requirements for a master's degree in mathematics and in September of 1956 was given a post on the first faculty of the University of Dallas, teaching college algebra. By the end of the year, meanwhile, the architectural plans for a permanent monastery were completed. Yet, on February 1, 1957, his presentation to the council did not sound very optimistic: "Construction could begin any time," the minutes of the meeting state, "but the land to be given us has not been deeded and may not be deeded for another decade." It looked as if it were going to take another ten years for the University to pay for the 1000 acres that it had purchased in Irving and, before full payment was made, the title to that 34-acre portion of the land given to the Cistercians could not be transferred.

For the Cistercian community, this was a major set back: they wanted to use the land donated to them as collateral for the bank loan they needed for building the monastery. Fr. Anselm wondered, in fact, if he should offer to buy 10 acres in order to obtain the title of the site on which the monastery was to be built. His council, however, did not quite understand his pessimism. They saw no reason to pay for any acreage that was supposed to be granted to them free of charge. Fr. Louis proposed that, instead of inquiring at a bank, the Bishop be asked for a loan. The meeting which had begun on February 1 then continued on February 4. It just so happened that the Bishop was also at this time urging the Board of Trustees to deed the land in question immediately to the Cistercians and expedite, in this way, the cause of the new monastery.

Alongside these exciting new prospects, however, a new challenge arose. From Hungary, there came numerous requests for financial help. Abbot Wendelin himself, who at this time had not yet been returned to prison, was asking for more aid. In addition, new expenses burdened the community on behalf of the fourteen newly arrived refugees, all of whom were in need of food, clothes, shelter, and money for school tuition. Other refugees arrived with letters of recommendation from Abbot Wendelin, explaining that Zirc owed them financial assistance. The February 4th meeting became tense as these various requests were discussed. Fr. Anselm made it clear that if the community failed to build a home, it might easily disband; others recommended that a limit to the help available for Zirc be assessed and communicated to Abbot Wendelin. The Council then decided that the drawings of the new monastery should be given out for bid and that "all money we have

should be made available for this construction."

On March 12, 1957, the council met once again. The lowest bid for the construction had come from the Fuller Company for \$258,000. Though the title to the land had still not been obtained, Fr. Anselm asked the Council to decide by secret ballot whether or not they were ready to sign a contract and begin the construction. By a vote of four to two, the Council supported the idea that the contract should be signed immediately. The solemn groundbreaking ceremony was planned for March 30.

At about the same time in Hungary, Abbot Wendelin, along with other priests and bishops, including several Cistercians, was again arrested and imprisoned. The full rigor of Communist terror had returned. Once restored to power, the regime began a bloody era of revenge to assure that no other revolution would ever take place. Horrified by the news, the Abbot General addressed each community of the Order in a circular letter which extolled the merits of the Hungarian Cistercians, and described Abbot Wendelin as "a true martyr" and an exemplary leader. The letter also demonstrated that Abbot General Kleiner who, in 1953, had shown no sympathy for the community of Zirc, had now gone through a change of heart even to the point of attempting to mobilize the support of the whole Order on behalf of the Hungarian Cistercians.

By the end of the summer the new monastery was well on its way toward completion but was not expected to be finished before December. Since the Swiss Avenue residence could accommodate no more members, and since the dorms of the University were full, a temporary home was needed for five members of the Community. St. Luke's parish in Irving, and St. Edward's and St. Joseph's in Dallas offered their hospitality. This being the second school year at the University, and for some of the Cistercians the third year in Dallas, a spirit of optimism abounded. The last Council meeting in the Swiss Avenue residence was held on Christmas Day. Every paragraph of the minutes is upbeat. The monastery was now almost entirely finished, and a donor had paid for the construction of both a garage and laundry. The minutes end with the following sentence: "Tomorrow, we begin to move into the new monastery. Therefore, this was the last council meeting at 4946 Swiss Avenue in Dallas."

The New Monastery Opens

The official opening and blessing of the new monastery was scheduled for February 9, 1958. The Abbot General undertook a special trip to Dallas, and Bishop Gorman officiated. The little monastery, which encompassed the whole south wing of the present building, offered more than what five years earlier the refugees could have hoped for. A small chapel on the first floor provided space for the daily recitation of the liturgical hours. It had space for three altars, with two more set up in the hallways, for the daily private masses. The Abbot General accepted the daily schedule which provided conventual mass with Gregorian chant, common prayer of all the hours of the Divine Office, readings and meditation in common, table reading at meals, and required silence in the building.

According to the standards of the fifties, the building was quite modern and comfortable. Most importantly, air conditioning was provided



Bishop Gorman and Abbot Sighard at the dinner of February 9, 1958.

in each room, still a luxury for religious houses until the late sixties. Each private room was equipped with a bathroom containing a shower, toilet, and bathtub. (Typically, a religious house or convent would have provided one bathroom for every two rooms.)

An asphalt road connected the monastery's lot with the long dirt road leading to the university. The house was surrounded with prairie and wildlife. There was a sense of romantic isolation—of having fled the world—while the automobiles of the monastery, as well as the jobs the community held at the university and in the city, guaranteed firm involvement in the life of a growing metropolitan area. The Abbot General was pleasantly surprised to find that the monastery was not really in the city, since for miles in every direction no house was in sight. He of course could not have known that a freeway had already been staked out in the immediate vicinity of the new monastery. He looked out only over a dirt road and railroad tracks which provided little disturbance or noise. Nor could he have known that the university had reserved for itself an easement which entitled it, at any time over the next 25 years, to build a railroad spur across the property at any place it chose. (This easement expired without the university ever using it.)

In any case, the attitude of the Abbot General was a far cry from what he had exhibited five years earlier. He raised no objections to the monastery's desire to become independent and to open a novitiate. After this visitation the creation of an "independent" (*sui iuris*) monastery was just a legal formality which then became a reality through a decree of the Abbot General dated March 21, 1961. In addition, after the arrival of further

Hungarian Cistercians from Europe, the foundation was elevated in record time to the rank of an abbey. The decree of the Holy See was dated November 13, 1963. A few days later, on November 22, 1963—an otherwise tragic date for Dallas, the day on which President Kennedy was assassinated—in a consultative vote, Fr. Anselm was elected to become the first abbot of the newly constituted abbey, "Our Lady of Dallas." Abbot Wendelin of Zirc, still under police surveillance but free to write letters, appointed, as church law required, the first abbot of the monastery. The new abbot was blessed and installed on January 5, 1964 at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Dallas by Abbot General Sighard, with Bishop Gorman in attendance.

As the formal foundation of the Abbey came to a close, Fr. Bernard Marton, who would become the first novice to make final vows and be ordained a priest in the new monastery, was already a junior member in temporary vows.

The Vantage Point of 1958

In 1958, as the monastery opened its doors for the first time, many hopes were formulated in more or less clear terms. Some have come about, while others failed to materialize:

Building a full monastery for forty people. This quickly became a reality. In 1959 a second (east) wing was built in which a larger temporary chapel was located and the original refectory was enlarged. In 1964 a third (west) wing was constructed, completing a U-shaped monastery open to the north, with the main entrance being to the west.

Becoming an independent abbey. The monastery formally obtained a status of independence in 1961, though the legal implications caused a good deal of confusion. A new constitution for the monastery was not obtained until 1989. The final step, however, did not take place until 1991, when the whole Congregation of Zirc received new constitutions, integrating this new foundation of Our Lady of Dallas into its juridical structure.

Returning to Hungary. In 1958, Fr. Anselm repeatedly stated that "in our lifetime" we, as members of the community, would not be able ever again to return to Hungary. Concerning this prediction he was mistaken in many ways yet was right in one unique way. In the late sixties hard-line communism in Hungary was replaced by a sort of "Communist consumerism" (called by many "Goulash Communism") which began to promote tourism from the West. In 1964, in fact, the government granted amnesty to all those who left Hungary illegally, thereby making travel to Hungary possible for all members of the Abbey. From the early 70's on, most members of the Abbey began to visit Hungary on a regular basis. On the other hand, although he was the first to leave the homeland, Abbot Anselm refused ever to return. He did not, unfortunately, live long enough to see the demise of communism: he died in 1988, one year before the spectacular collapse of the communist world. Nor did Fr. Louis ever return to Hungary. He suffered a stroke in 1981 and remained paralyzed until he died in 1994.

Founding a secondary school. This project was a high priority for Abbot Anselm, but was a controversial one for those who wanted their own involvement at the University to be the norm for the monastery's future. When the Cistercian Preparatory School was founded, with the exception of Fr.

Damian, none of those who had taught in secondary schools in Hungary participated in this new enterprise. Nevertheless, though the subject of much controversy within the community, it was this one project that established for the Cistercians in Dallas a name and reputation which has reached, through the school's alumni, far beyond the confines of the metroplex. In addition, the Abbey truly became independent in virtue of its ability to become self-employed. Furthermore, the financial independence of the community was realized through the success of the prep school. Finally, with the help of the school community, the "fifty acres" dreamed of by Abbot Anselm became a reality in 1994 when the abbey was able to extend its holdings to another 25 acres, thereby assuring its privacy and security in the face of any future development.

Building a church. In 1961, after the first two wings of the monastery were built, the community realized that building a school would make any further development of the monastery impossible. But the community had decided to follow that course, and one of its consequences was that only one more construction, that of the west wing, was possible. Two architects early on had sketched designs for a church, one in 1958, another in 1964, but these plans could not be realized. Between 1964 and 1985 four major building projects took place at the prep school, consuming a great deal of money: the middle school (1965), the upper school (1967), the gymnasium (1972) and the science building (1985). Abbot Anselm died without knowing if the dream of a Cistercian church in Dallas would ever become a reality. Yet the splendid Abbey Church has come about, and did so as an initiative undertaken by the school's alumni, under the leadership of Jere Thompson and Jim Moroney (class '74), according to the design of architect Gary Cunningham (class '72), and carried out by building contractor Wade Andres (class '75). The young men educated by the Cistercian Prep School paid back in a marvelous and unexpected way what had been sacrificed for their sake.

Conclusion

Beginning with Cîteaux 900 years ago, Cistercians founded their monasteries in many different ways. Some came about slowly and in a tortuous way; some had quick and well-prepared beginnings; some focused on clear goals; others were tentative. The story of Our Lady of Dallas is quite unique in that it came about almost in spite of its confused, painful, and destitute beginnings. Forty years later, these early days begin to shine with the evidence of what Abbot Anselm had already captured in his speech at the opening of the monastery: "God was always with us."

The Founding of Cistercian Preparatory School: A Story of Rededications

Fr. Peter Verhalen, O. Cist.

Having once read through a partial file on the founding of Cistercian Preparatory School, the parent of a Cistercian alumnus interested in opening a school for girls like Cistercian dropped the idea and made the following observation:

The material was both encouraging and daunting. Although I had conceived before some idea of the difficulties one would confront in any such undertaking, upon reading the account I realized that the task must have been forbidding at the outset and did not become much easier for twenty years. Building a school evidently requires continual rededications on the part of key movers who have to be drawn along, propped up, or galvanized by a leader who also negotiates between faculty, parents, government, and financial contributors and who will not think of relenting. This is a tall order not to be entered into by short-lived enthusiasts.

Unlike the author of the passage, the "key movers" in the establishment of Cistercian Prep School had no file to read before they founded the school, and that is probably for the better. It is always easier to rededicate oneself to a goal if the number of rededications is not foreseen.

On September 4, 1962, Thomas K. Gorman, Bishop of the Diocese of Dallas-Fort Worth, celebrated the first Mass of the Holy Spirit, which would then become the traditional opening ceremony at Cistercian Preparatory School. Gathered for the Mass in the abbey chapel were 22 Pre-Formers (4th graders), 25 First Formers (5th graders), their parents, and the faculty. During his homily Bishop Gorman commented that in the Cistercians'

fine tradition, it has been their desire since coming here to establish a distinguished school for boys. Today we see the beginnings of that effort and as we look forward down the years I think we may expect to see it grow into one of the finest schools of this type in our area and in the United States.

The bishop did not mention that he himself had at first been resistant to the establishment of the school.

At the suggestion of the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur, Bishop Gorman had invited the Cistercians to move into the diocese some eight years earlier, in 1954, to help staff the University of Dallas, the new university that was to be the crown of the bishop's Catholic school system. The Sisters of St. Mary had initially taken the lead in the administration of the university. They soon recognized, however, that they needed a group of priests to assist

them if the new institution was to be coeducational. Through their schools in Fort Worth, Dallas, and Wichita Falls, the sisters had already met several Cistercian priests. Because the young Cistercians had advanced degrees, came from a monastic tradition of teaching, and as refugees from Communist Hungary, were looking for a diocese in which to settle, it was quite natural that it was to them that the Sisters turned for help.

On March 25, 1955, Fr. Anselm Nagy, Fr. Damian Szödényi, and Fr. Thomas Fehér signed the Charter of Incorporation of the Cistercian Monastery Our Lady of Dallas. The superior, Prior Anselm Nagy, then wrote Eugene Constantin, the bishop's advisor, requesting 50 acres of land for the new Cistercian monastery. The monks, Prior Anselm explained, would need the land for their monastic residence, their monastery church, a guesthouse, and a school. On March 28, 1956, over a year later, Bishop Gorman wrote Prior Anselm to confirm his agreement on behalf of the University of Dallas to grant the Cistercians 40 acres of land with the understanding that "30 acres are to be used for the monastery proper and that 10 acres are to be used for the parish church and parish purposes, school, convent, etc." Although neither Bishop Gorman nor Prior Anselm foresaw accurately the future development of the Cistercians' apostolate, the bishop clearly understood that the Cistercians planned to grow as a community and eventually to assume their traditional responsibilities of parish work and teaching.

Both their constitutions and history explain the Cistercians' intentions. The Constitutions of the Congregation of Zirc, to which the monks in Dallas belonged, declare that the members of the Congregation, characteristically priests, monks, and teachers, are to pursue as their apostolate the education of youth in secondary schools, an historical fact that can be traced back two centuries. When the Holy See suppressed the Jesuits in 1773, the Cistercian monks of Páztó took over the Jesuit school in the nearby city of Eger. In 1813 Francis I, Emperor of Austria and King of Hungary, granted the Cistercians continued recognition in his realm if they proved "their usefulness to society" by taking over two more schools formerly run by the Jesuits. The Cistercians then added in 1879 a fourth school, this one previously owned by Franciscans. Finally, in 1912 they opened their own school in Budapest. Thus, by World War I the Cistercians were running five schools in Hungary, all "gymnasiums" – that is, eight-year programs preparing students for university studies. Although the Cistercian school in Budapest soon earned recognition as one of the very best schools in the entire country, the success was short-lived. The aftermath of World War II brought a quick end to this history when in 1948 the communist government confiscated all five schools, and two years later suppressed the Cistercian order in Hungary. After some had wandered in search of a new home for more than ten years, the Hungarian Cistercians finally settled in Dallas in 1955 in the hope of living out their traditional, threefold vocation as priests, monks, and teachers.

Catholic families of the diocese were at the same time formulating what proved to be a complementary desire for a Catholic prep school for boys. Several trends probably drove these families to promote Catholic secondary education in the diocese. First, many Catholics, newly arrived in Dallas from more traditionally Catholic areas like St. Louis and the East Coast, wanted the same sort of Catholic school system here that they had known in

other parts of the country. Second, within many of the more prominent Catholic families in the diocese were professionals who had graduated from very selective colleges and universities and who wanted their children to attend the same sorts of colleges, even though the competition for admission was becoming increasingly more difficult. Third, as America sought to "catch up" in the space race, an interest in improving American education in general, not just Catholic education, was sweeping the country. These local Catholic families expected the faculty of a Catholic boys' school to be mostly religious men and laymen and to have advanced degrees in all the major subjects. In effect, they were hoping to redefine academic excellence, at least in the Dallas area.

Mr. and Mrs. William Bret, Dr. and Mrs. Mike Healy, and Mr. and Mrs. Bryan Smith, along with several other families, took the initiative. They were encouraged in their project by an article in *Time* magazine on a similar enterprise in St. Louis, where several families had recently recruited a group of Benedictine monks from England to start a school for boys. Within a few years the St. Louis Priory School had won for itself a national reputation: Oxford-educated British monks were preparing students for admission to America's best colleges. A St. Louis native, Dr. Healy organized a trip with Mr. Bret and Mr. Smith to visit the St. Louis Priory School in March of 1961. The parents were hoping that the St. Louis Benedictines could advise them on how to establish a similar school in Dallas. Though Mr. Smith, an attorney and the Chief Financial Officer for Texas Instruments, Inc., was himself unable to attend, the fact that he sponsored the trip of the young Cistercian monk Fr. Moses Nagy shows that these founding families were already involving the Cistercians in their quest for a Catholic prep school for boys.

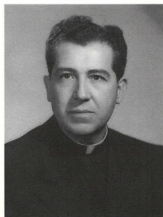
At about this time Mr. and Mrs. Patrick E. Haggerty became interested in the Cistercian project. Pat Haggerty was the CEO of TI and the immediate boss of Bryan Smith. Together Bryan Smith and Bea Haggerty convinced Bishop Gorman to grant his permission for the new boys' prep school which he had opposed initially for two reasons: first, he had invited the Cistercians into the diocese to teach at the University of Dallas, not in their own prep school, and, second, with several Catholic high schools already in the diocese, he did not see the need for another. By March, 1961, however, Bryan Smith and Bea Haggerty had succeeded in convincing the bishop that the new school would not burden the diocese financially and that, as Smith liked to say, it would soon become "a jewel in the bishop's crown." The bishop finally gave his permission on the condition that a general fund-raising campaign not be launched, and that all funds for the school be raised from those parents directly interested in it.

At this point the project seemed ready for "launch." First, the goal of establishing a Catholic prep school for boys to be run by Cistercian priests had been set. In addition, the "key movers" had found each other: the Cistercian priests and several prominent Catholic families, especially the Brets, the Haggertys, the Healys, and the Smiths. Lastly, the bishop's permission for the project had been obtained.

The next task was to interest other families in sending their sons to Cistercian and in supporting the school financially. On May 23, 1961, the Smiths, the Brets, and the Healys hosted a buffet in the Smith home for

parents interested in the new school, especially those who might be able to help with the funding. Because Prior Anselm was in Rome at the time, Fr. Damian Szödényi as subprior attended the meeting in his place. Fr. Moses, who had made the trip to St. Louis, addressed the group of some 60 families. He justified the need for a new prep school and laid out its curriculum and basic structure. In his presentation Fr. Moses stressed the explosion of information, the accelerating pace of modern life, and the heightened competition for places in selective colleges. To meet these challenges, the new preparatory school would offer a curriculum comparable to those in the best prep schools of the country. The school would open with one grade level, the fifth grade, and add a new grade each year for the next seven years. He illustrated the general academic rigor of the curriculum by citing requirements in languages and math. Students would begin Latin in grade 5. Spanish or French would begin in the third year, and in the fifth year, the students would begin German or Greek. All students would study math through the first two semesters of Calculus. Class size would be limited to 25, and teachers would be required to have at least a master's degree in the subjects they were teaching. In addition to five academic periods, the boys would have one supervised study hall a day and time for daily Mass. Saturdays would be devoted to athletics and extracurriculars. Admission to the school would be open to boys of all religious denominations. Each applicant would have to take a nationally standardized IQ test. In promoting the school Fr. Moses answered the perceived educational needs of Dallas families by essentially importing the curriculum of the Cistercians' schools in Hungary.

This initial meeting was important for several reasons. First, the enthusiastic response of the parents showed that the project was viable. Many families were interested not only in an academically rigorous program but also in a program that could claim to be "classical" in virtue of its European antecedents. Second, Mr. and Mrs. Haggerty proposed that the school begin



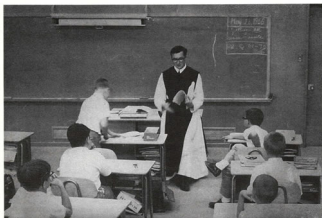
Fr. Damian Szödényi in 1962.

with the fourth grade rather than the fifth grade, as was traditional in Hungary. Third, the Haggertys and other families pledged their financial support for the new school. Finally, although Fr. Moses made the presentation, Fr. Damian emerged as the personality who could most effectively serve as the school's first headmaster.

To continue the development of the project, Prior Anselm appointed in June of 1961 the first headmaster with the duties of organizing and promoting the new school. Forty-nine years old at the time, Fr. Damian Szödényi had earned his doctorate in Hungarian literature while in Hungary and taught in the Cistercian school in Budapest. Soon after the war, he had emigrated from Hungary, making his way to the Hungarian Cistercian community in Spring Bank, Wisconsin, then settling with a small group of Cistercians in Buffalo, New York, where he taught Latin and psychology at the college level. When Prior Anselm appointed him as the first headmaster, Fr. Damian was teaching psychology at the University of Dallas and serving as dean of men. Fr. Damian agreed as headmaster to organize the school but did not want to assume responsibility either for fund-raising or the school's finances. As a result, the founding parents agreed to shoulder the burden of raising the funds, while Prior Anselm administered the school's budget.

In December Prior Anselm appointed other Cistercians to the faculty of the prep school. With a master's degree in history, Fr. Bede Lackner was to teach history, music, and geography. He also became Form Master of Form I (Grade 5). Fr. Daniel Csányi had earned a doctorate in theology as well as an advanced degree in biblical studies. He was to be the religion teacher and Form Master of the Pre-Form (Grade 4). Prior Anselm asked Fr. Aloysius Kimecz and Fr. Balthasar Szarka to move from their teaching assignments at St. Edward's Catholic High School in downtown Dallas in order to teach Spanish and French in the new prep school. Fr. Melchior Chladek was asked to teach biology.

The qualifications of the Cistercians first asked to teach in the prep school clearly set them apart from their colleagues in other schools. Cistercian was to be staffed by a group of priests with advanced degrees and a facility in foreign languages who also regarded teaching in the prep school as their vocation. At the same time, however, the inexperience of the faculty was striking. Fr. Damian had, indeed, taught in Hungary, but that was some 15 years previous. His experience teaching in America was limited and at the college level. While Fr. Aloysius and Fr. Balthasar, like Fr. Thomas and Fr. Henry who joined the Cistercian faculty later, had taught Latin or religion in Catholic high schools in the diocese, no one had significant experience teaching a class of American fourth or fifth graders. All this lack of experience inevitably gave rise to difficulties. Some teachers had troubles disciplining the boys, others began to wonder whether they were cut out to teach at the elementary or secondary level at all. Yet, to the credit of all involved, the Cistercians rededicated themselves to their vocation, and to the prep school, again and again. Moreover, their very inexperience, placed against the background of their European academic training, proved ultimately to be a great boon, for they were free to establish their own daily schedule, their own style in the classroom, their own expectations of the boys. They were free to define the American version of a Cistercian education.



Fr. Denis Farkasfalvy teaching math in Pre-Form, 1966.

The first formal attempt to define such a Cistercian education was made in 1962 in the school's first brochure. The school would be dedicated to "moral courage and intellectual eminence." More particularly it would seek to provide, first, "unsurpassed educational opportunities for boys"; second, a program based on the principles of "Christian education and designed for the development of a rich and integrated personality"; and third, a well-rounded curriculum with particular emphasis on languages, math and the natural sciences. For the school's motto the Cistercians chose the phrase *ardere et lucere*, translated as "to enkindle and to enlighten." During a spiritual renewal in the 1930's, the Hungarian Cistercians had chosen the phrase from the writings of the great Cistercian saint of the twelfth century, Bernard of Clairvaux. They adapted the phrase, however, to their own spiritual program and used it to designate the ideal Cistercian life, a life of religious contemplation (*ardere*) and apostolic activity (*lucere*). Departing from both Bernard's understanding of the phrase and from that of the Cistercian Order in Hungary, the founders of the school used the motto to express the educator's twofold objective of meeting the boy's emotional (*ardere*) and intellectual (*lucere*) needs. Today we tend to speak of community rather than "moral courage" and intellectual excellence rather than "eminence." Nevertheless, the twofold thrust of Cistercian remains the same: the moral and intellectual education of boys in the context of Christian values.

As the Cistercians and parents were busy promoting the new school, they were confronted with another major obstacle. Just one year before the scheduled opening in September 1962, Bishop Gorman informed Prior Anselm that the Cistercians would not be allowed to establish their school next to their monastery. Eugene Constantin, a major donor to the university and the Bishop's advisor, had convinced him that the presence of an elemen-

tary or high school on the grounds of the university would detract from its prestige. Constantin also argued that the Cistercians had been invited into the diocese to serve at the university, not to run their own school. As a consequence, the Cistercians and the founding families immediately began to discuss the possibility of locating the school elsewhere.

Many parents welcomed this change of plans since they had always hoped for a location closer to, if not within, North Dallas. The Cistercians, however, wanted a location close to their monastery and, in fact, had no choice in the matter. The Abbot General of the Cistercian Order wrote that he would not give his permission for a school if its location disrupted the monks' daily discipline of prayer and community life. The Cistercians then began looking at new sites for the monastery and school. Of the three sites seriously considered, the most attractive was a 51.8-acre tract of land known as the Georges' estate at the corner of Marsh Lane and Valley View Lane in Farmers Branch. Fritz Hawn, a friend of Bryan Smith, owned the estate and was willing to sell it to the Cistercians at a modest price. The Cistercians were so serious about moving that in the fall of 1961 Prior Anselm showed the Georges' estate to the monastery's new novice, Bernard Marton, a future headmaster of the school.

By the beginning of February, however, Bishop Gorman had reversed himself. He now forbade the Cistercians to move to a new location, saying that if they wanted to stay in Dallas, they would have to remain on the campus of the University of Dallas. Fr. Ed Maher, Executive Vice-President for the University, had in the interim convinced the bishop both that the Cistercians were playing a vital role at the University and that their school, located far from the actual campus, could have no negative impact on the University. Thus, in a letter dated March 2, 1962, Bishop Gorman authorized Prior Anselm to continue with his original plans for a school adjacent to the present monastery. He further said that if the Cistercians were to move it would be harmful to the Cistercians, to the university, and to the diocese. The Cistercians' serious consideration of relocating the monastery had thus convinced the bishop of their commitment to a prep school within the framework of their monastic way of life.

Permission to build next to the monastery did not solve the immediate need for a school building. Within six months of the bishop's letter, the Cistercians were to begin teaching their new fourth and fifth graders, but they still had no building. At about this time the Ursulines had decided to discontinue their boarding school housed in Merici Hall on the Ursulines' Walnut Hill Lane campus. The building was obviously convenient for the majority of the families who were planning to send their sons to Cistercian. Bryan Smith worked out the contract for the Cistercians to rent Merici Hall for several years. As part of the agreement the Cistercians would provide the Ursulines with one priest to celebrate Mass and teach religion. The Ursulines, in turn, would provide one sister to teach English and language arts in the prep school. Merici Hall seemed to provide the perfect interim solution while the Cistercians built a school on their own grounds.

* * *



Class '72 in First Form in the "old school" (Merici Hall), 1963.

Only 18 months after the Cistercians and the interested Catholic families had first begun discussing the project, Cistercian Preparatory School opened on September 4, 1962. Those first Cistercian families sent their sons to a school characterized not only by the demanding curriculum but also by details of daily routine and special outings that distinguished Cistercian from other schools in the early '60s as well as from the Cistercian of today. Although parents drove their sons to school for the first two years, Cistercian's distinctively green school buses began picking up students when they moved to the present location in Irving in the 1964-1965 school year. In addition to their gray pants and white shirts, the Middle School students wore a gray sweater with the school's crest and a black tie. In their first year Cistercian students began their day at 8:45 and did not finish until 4:00 pm. They had 30 minutes scheduled for Mass every day before lunch. A weekly class Mass, however, very soon replaced the daily school Mass. Although the very first Cistercian students enjoyed a Christmas party before the Christmas vacation began, anxiety over the imminent semester exams did not dampen the festive spirit, for they did not take their exams until the second week in January. Only in the late '60s did Cistercian begin concluding the first semester before Christmas.

On September 26, the Feast of Sts. Cosmas and Damian, the boys had only a half day of classes: in the afternoon they celebrated the headmaster's feastday with games, especially one known as bombardment. For athletics those first Cistercian students fenced and played soccer before it had become the popular sport it is today. In their second year the boys could look forward to a ski camp, a 7-10 day excursion in a New Mexico or Colorado ski resort immediately after Christmas or, later on, during the spring break in March. Most importantly, however, the students found at Cistercian some-



Fencing taught by Emery deGall, 1963.

thing that distinguished it from any other school in the area, the faculty of educated Hungarian priests. In their thick accents (which were soon flawlessly imitated), the Cistercians not only challenged the students to the intellectual excellence represented by their own academic degrees but also enkindled in the students an admiration for the beauties of European culture and of a life given to God in a religious vocation.

In order to begin that first year the Cistercians had to design a curriculum. Although they had had no experience in designing a middle school program, they put into place a curriculum that, with certain adjustments over the years, has retained largely the same emphases. Unlike most local students at the time Cistercian boys attended art and music classes weekly. They also had classes in ancient history and civilization. They all took Spanish or French in Pre-Form (Grade 4) and then added Latin in Form I. In Form I they also began their study of science with biology, and their math classes were designed to prepare them for two semesters of Calculus in their senior year. All this was in addition to language arts, religion, penmanship, and physical education. Ironically, it is quite possible that if they had had more experience in elementary education, the Cistercians might not have put together such a demanding curriculum. Nor would the students have taken such pride in their "grown-up" classes.

In the beginning Cistercian met its operating expenses from tuition and voluntary donations. The tuition for that first year was only \$650, more than that of either the parochial schools or the other Catholic prep schools, Jesuit and Ursuline, but less than the other private schools, Greenhill, Hockaday, and St. Mark's. In its first decade, the tuition together with donations to the school and to the building fund, enabled the school to meet its operating expenses, make a contribution to the abbey for the services of the Cistercian

priests, and pay for the construction of the buildings. In fact, the abbey began to receive as early as 1964 some salary for the Cistercians teaching in the school even though the abbey continued to make a cash donation to the school's operating expenses for almost a decade. The difference between the salary the Cistercians were paid and the real value of their services entered the school's books as contributed services.

By 1972, however, the abbey no longer made a cash donation to the school, and the school's income from tuition and fees alone met its operating expenses. Then, in 1980 the Board began encouraging the school to pay a more realistic salary for the services of the Cistercians. As the number of Cistercians teaching at the University of Dallas decreased, the Cistercians in the prep school were able more and more to earn the salaries necessary to support themselves. They continued, however, to fund at least 60% of the scholarships at the school through their contributed services. On a related note, the school solicited contributions to the Building Fund until 1972, the year in which the gymnasium was completed. From that time on donations have been requested for the Sustentation Fund, whose dual purpose is to maintain the facilities and to fund capital improvements.

That first year of the prep school was marked by enthusiasm for the new project and the inevitable difficulties that come with a lack of experience. In June of 1963 a group of parents and Cistercians met to evaluate the year. Bryan Smith attended the meeting, then met privately with Prior Anselm and several Cistercians before summarizing in a memo to Fr. Damian the points of the discussion. Student discipline was the first point. Although a draft of the Rules and Regulations dated October 1, 1962, existed, the school did not seem to be carrying out its provisions. Moreover, in the absence of clear guidelines consistently enforced, the faculty found it easy to disagree, even publicly, on the standards and methods of discipline. Some advocated limited corporal punishment, while others wanted a more "progressive" approach to discipline. The second point dealt with the philosophy of the school. Several perceived Fr. Damian to be advocating Professor Dewey's model of "progressive" education rather than following a more traditional, classical, European model. Third, several parents and teachers questioned the quality of textbooks as well as the performance of one of the lay teachers. Fourth, the parents noted that the homework policy was unclear. Many, in fact, did not seem to know whether homework was required of their sons or simply optional. Finally, some parents voiced the concern that the school was earning a reputation as a school for "problem children." In his memo, Bryan Smith suggested that Fr. Damian take into account the first year's experiences and formulate in writing the school's policy on the issues that had been raised at the meeting. That such issues came up was only to be expected. That the parents and Cistercians persevered in working out solutions testifies to their commitment to making real their dream of an exceptional Catholic prep school for boys.

* * *

On the otherwise tragic evening of November 22, 1963, the Cistercian monks themselves took another important step in making that dream real. On the evening of President Kennedy's assassination, the Cistercian monks elected Prior Anselm Nagy as their first abbot. Although the Cistercians had been formally invited into the diocese in 1954, they only became a fully independent monastery in 1961 when the majority of the monks changed their vows of religious stability from the Hungarian monastery of Zirc to the new monastery and elected Fr. Anselm as their superior. Shortly afterwards, the Cistercian Order's General Chapter petitioned the Holy See to complete the juridical process of founding a new abbey, thereby elevating the Cistercian monastery into a full-fledged abbey.

On January 5, 1964, with Bishop Gorman presiding, Abbot Anselm received the abbatial blessing at Dallas' Sacred Heart Cathedral and was installed in his office. The Very Reverend Sighard Kleiner, Abbot General of the Cistercian Order, celebrated the benediction with the assistance of Abbot Alfred Hoenig from the Benedictine abbey in Corpus Christi and Abbot Michael Lensing from the Benedictine abbey of New Subiaco in Arkansas. Abbot Raymond Molnár from the Cistercian abbey of Spring Bank, Wisconsin, and the Trappist Abbot Augustine Moore were also present. Some 100 clergymen from the Diocese of Dallas-Fort Worth participated. Monsignor Bender, pastor of Christ the King Parish, delivered the homily. During the appreciation dinner that followed, Abbot General Kleiner spoke of the Cistercian Order and its new foundation in Texas. Monsignor John Gulczynski, pastor of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish, commented on the pastoral contributions of the Cistercians in the Dallas-Fort Worth Diocese. Dr. Donald Cowan then spoke of the Cistercians' role in the founding of the University of Dallas and their contribution as members of the faculty. As chairman of the Advisory Board of the new prep school, Bryan Smith spoke of the place of Cistercian Preparatory School in the diocese's educational system. Finally, Bishop Gorman congratulated Abbot Anselm and the Cistercians, and thanked them for their contributions to the diocese.

The warm, congratulatory words were much appreciated, but the full, juridical erection of the Abbey Our Lady of Dallas meant much more than a dinner in honor of the Cistercians. According to canon law the monastery was now a fully established and stable juridical unit in the Cistercian Order, and the Cistercian abbot exercised the same degree of jurisdiction as the local bishop. It also meant that the Cistercians had sunk their roots deep into the Texas soil and had thereby committed themselves to the life of the school, their primary work.

* * *

With the juridical foundation of the abbey complete, the Cistercians could turn their full attention to two building projects already underway. Following the traditional plan of a monastery which called for a rectangular building enclosing a courtyard, the Cistercians built and then in December of 1957 occupied the first (south) wing. Later, in 1960 they built the east wing and by 1964 they were ready once again to move ahead, this time building the west wing. The abbey itself paid for the entire project with



Frs. Benedict, Damian, Abbot Anselm, Aloysius, and Daniel inspect the construction of the Middle School as it begins in 1964.

the income earned by the Cistercian priests.

As the first project was drawing to a close, the second was just getting underway, the first permanent building for the prep school. In May of 1963, after the prep school's first year of classes, Prior Anselm announced to the parents that the school's permanent location would be on the monastery grounds. He asked Bryan Smith to chair a building committee with the responsibility of overseeing the building's design and fund-raising. The members of the committee were Smith, Bea Haggerty and Frank Heller. O'Neil Ford was chosen as architect and was asked to draw up a preliminary master plan. Notes from meetings in early October 1963 list the buildings to be included in the architect's master site plan: middle school and upper school buildings, each housing eight classrooms large enough for 25 students each; administration building and library, with space for a school museum, chapel, language laboratory, and faculty offices; gymnasium; science building with labs for biology, chemistry, and physics; auditorium with facilities for art, music and theater; and dormitories to accommodate up to 100 boys.

A fund-raising brochure from 1963 sets the cost for the entire prep school plant except for the dormitories at \$1 - \$1.5 million. During a meeting for parents of all Cistercian students on February 24, 1964, Bryan Smith displayed the master site plan and a detailed floor plan for the middle school, which had already been given out for bids. He explained that construction was to begin in March, that the cost of the 21,000 square-foot building with furnishings would be about \$350,000, that the abbey itself would contribute \$100,000 to the project, and that the current parents would be asked to raise the remaining \$250,000. Mr. William Bret served as the chairman of the fund-raising committee. As initially stipulated by Bishop Gorman, the fund-

raisers approached only parents of current or prospective Cistercian students and the corporations to which these parents had access.

Just 13 months later on Sunday, March 21, 1965, the Feast of St. Benedict, Bishop Gorman presided over the hour-long benediction of the abbey's new wing and the new school building. The two green Cistercian school buses brought students to the ceremony that began in the abbey and concluded in the school. Speaking in the name of the school community, Bryan Smith commented on the difficulty the Cistercian community had overcome in constructing a building and in laying roads in an area which seemed doomed to frequent flooding. He referred also to the difficulty of raising \$250,000 from only the 82 Cistercian families, all young families who had been associated with the school for at most three years. Through the hard work and generosity of the parents and Cistercian priests, the difficulties, however, were all overcome. He concluded his remarks with the announcement of two future building projects, namely those for an upper school and a gymnasium, both of which were already urgently needed.

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In 1967, the school's fifth year, four important developments took place. In the fall, one and a half years after the dedication of the middle school, Cistercian saw the completion of its second building, the upper school. O'Neil Ford had again been retained as architect. With 151 students in Pre-Form through Form V, Cistercian badly needed the new facility, especially since the 37 students in Form II occupied two classrooms.

Then in February 1967, Abbot Anselm introduced two important administrative changes. First, he appointed as assistant headmaster Fr. Placid



Abbot Anselm teaching theology to the Fifth Form in 1968-69.

Csizmazia, who was an alumnus and former teacher of the Budapest Cistercian school and who held a doctorate in classics. Fr. Damian continued to represent the school to the public and to oversee its general administration. Fr. Placid now planned the curriculum and assisted with faculty supervision. He was also in charge of student discipline.

The second administrative change was the formation of a Board of Advisors, later called the School Board. According to its original constitution, the Board's purpose was to advise the abbot and headmaster on educational policies and plans, on financial matters, on questions of public relations, and on any other matter that might be brought to its attention. The School Board in 1966-67 included four Cistercians: Prior Christopher Rábay, Fr. Benedict Monostori, Fr. Placid Csizmazia, and *ex officio* Fr. Damian Szödényi as headmaster. An equal number of laymen also sat on the Board: Mr. William Bret, Mr. Patrick E. Haggerty, Dr. Louis Johnston, and Mr. Bryan Smith. Fr. Abbot Anselm Nagy was president of the Board. Cistercian was one of the first schools run by a religious order to set up a board of advisors comprised of laymen as well as religious.

Finally, Cistercian submitted its report for accreditation to the Texas Education Agency. As Assistant Headmaster, Fr. Placid Csizmazia compiled the official report with its 15 addenda covering every area of school administration from the qualifications of the 28 faculty members to the number of minutes allotted for each subject. By the end of the year two representatives from the Texas Education Agency had visited Cistercian and reported back to the diocesan superintendent of schools, Sr. Caroleen Hensgen. Then, on February 29, 1968, Sr. Caroleen wrote Fr. Damian that "all the schools in the diocese shared in the good name" that Cistercian's academic program was creating for itself within the diocese.

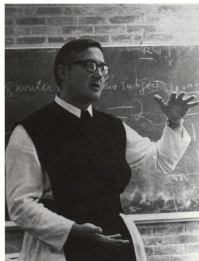
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The school's next challenge came in the fall of 1969 with the first change in headmasters. For its first seven years Fr. Damian had as headmaster inspired parents and students. His personality, in the words of one parent, simply made the school "perk." Fr. Damian, however, brought more to the school than his personality. He also brought his love for art and self-expression, his interest in ancient history and archaeology, his belief that learning and culture would excite talented boys, and his hope that each form under its form master would be a sort of family. More than the administrator of a class, the form master was to be a "father" for a group of boys. He guided his class through Cistercian's 8-year program, moving with them from grade level to grade level. During the Closing Ceremonies of the previous May, students had presented to Fr. Damian a plaque on which they expressed their appreciation for his role in articulating Cistercian's mission and laying the school's foundations: "His kindness, patience and deep understanding have laid the foundations for a seat of wisdom, a light of the world, a minister of the faith, an alma mater of the rising generation. To you, Fr. Damian, we your boys will be for ever grateful." Once freed from his responsibilities as headmaster, Fr. Damian pursued his interests in art by taking classes at the University of Dallas, teaching art in the prep school, and eventually working

full-time in the abbey art studio.

Abbot Anselm appointed Fr. Denis Farkasfalvy to take over the duties of headmaster on June 1, 1969. After graduation from the Benedictine prep school of Pannonhalma in Hungary, he entered the Cistercian Order clandestinely and with several other Cistercians completed his novitiate underground. Under directions of his religious superior, he began attending classes in law at the University of Budapest. The Hungarian Revolution in 1956 provided the occasion for him and other Cistercians to flee the country. He continued his studies in Rome at the Pontifical University of Sant' Anselmo, where he earned his doctorate in theology. Upon his arrival to Dallas in 1963, Abbot Anselm asked him to study mathematics with the goal of teaching in the prep school. In two years he had learned English and earned a master's in mathematics from Texas Christian University in Fort Worth. In 1965 he became form master for the Pre-Form and began teaching math and religion. By the fall of 1969, when he assumed the post of headmaster, he was 33 years old and was beginning his fifth year in the school.

As a new headmaster, Fr. Denis had many tasks to confront. With the graduation of its first class just one year away, he had to begin counseling the students on college as well as selling the school to college admissions departments. The school's size, 160 students in eight forms, called for a revision of the rules and regulations. Because the eight-year academic program was being fully implemented for the first time, he could review the effectiveness of the whole curriculum. As part of that effort, with the assistance of the department heads, he put together course descriptions for each course. In addition, a new element of accountability was introduced through the reality of college applications. Since Cistercian students had to perform



Fr. Denis in his second term as headmaster, 1978.

well on the standardized college entrance exams, he emphasized the need for mastering in the middle school the techniques for taking standardized tests. Finally, he had to provide the staff and facilities for a full high school sports program. He hoped to accomplish all this in the atmosphere of the late '60's, when students increasingly preferred demonstrating against the Vietnam War and the Establishment to meeting rigorous academic demands.

In his third year as headmaster, Fr. Denis oversaw the construction of the gymnasium and auditorium. On November 18, 1972, Cistercian celebrated its 10th anniversary with the dedication of the new facility. Acting on behalf of the School Board, Bryan Smith highlighted the great strides the school had made in its brief history. As part of the dedication ceremony, the students staged their second drama, a performance of *Indians* by Arthur Kopit. In its first two years of varsity play, the football team had already competed for the conference title. The students boasted an award-winning newspaper, the *Informer*. Students of the first three classes were now at such selective universities as Harvard, Regis, Rice, Texas A&M, the United States Naval Academy, the University of Dallas, UT Austin, Vanderbilt, and Yale. Other buildings and much remodeling were to follow, but the gymnasium-auditorium completed the physical plant for the next decade.

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The next major difficulty came in the spring of 1974 as the result of a regular election of the Abbot's Council. When he was neither elected nor appointed to the Council, Fr. Denis was no longer able to represent the prep school before the abbey's administration. Feeling that he lacked the support of the abbey's community necessary to carry out his duties as headmaster effectively, he submitted his resignation. With the permission of Abbot Anselm, he went to Rome to study Sacred Scripture at the Pontifical Biblical Institute. Fr. Henry Marton, a member of the council and a teacher in the prep school since 1963, was appointed to take over the direction of the prep school.

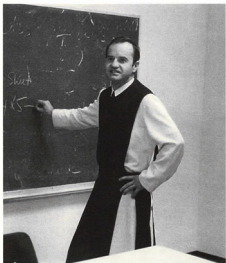


*Fr. Henry Marton teaching
foreign language, 1975.*

The deep division within the Cistercian community soon became still more apparent. It is perhaps important to remember that these men, though all Hungarian monks solemnly professed to the abbey of Zirc, nevertheless reflected a variety of different ideals and attitudes reflecting Zirc's last fifty years. They came to Dallas as men variously formed by their experience of monastic life in Hungary as well as by their life as refugees. Conflict seemed almost inevitable. As part of the renewal of religious life, Vatican II had required religious communities to revise their constitutions, which prompted the Cistercians to change the term of the abbot's office from a life term to one of six years. During the regular canonical visitation of 1975, Abbot Anselm asked for and lost a vote of confidence. Having served as superior for almost 30 years, Abbot Anselm had understandably developed a leadership style and taken decisions that had effectively split the community in two. He resigned on February 1, 1975. The election of a new abbot was postponed one year to give the community time to settle on a new superior. Fr. Christopher Rábay was elected prior administrator for the interim and, recognizing the need for experienced leadership in the school at a time when the abbey itself was searching for a leader, asked Fr. Denis to return to his post in the prep school. Fr. Denis then served as headmaster for another six years (1975-1981). In April 1976, the abbey, recognizing that only Fr. Anselm could hold the two groups together, reversed its previous vote of no-confidence and re-elected him as abbot. Abbot Anselm then served two successive six-year terms before the election of Fr. Denis as abbot in 1988. It was during this period that Abbot Anselm established the custom that the headmaster is always a member of the abbot's council. The year 1974-1975 was a tumultuous year for the Cistercians, but the community asserted the primacy of its work in the prep school and stabilized the administration of both abbey and school.

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Perhaps the most critical stage in the development of an institution is the transition from the first generation to the next. To maintain both its integrity and effectiveness, the goals and dedication of the founders must be continued in a second generation. Sensing the toll the office had taken on his health and realizing the need to create a smooth transition to the next administration, Fr. Denis resigned as headmaster again in 1981. After consultation of the School Board, Abbot Anselm appointed Fr. Bernard Marton as Cistercian's fourth headmaster. Fr. Bernard had fled Hungary in 1956 when he was 15 years old. He eventually made his way to Irving, where his brother Fr. Henry Marton helped him settle into his new environment. Fr. Bernard earned his high school diploma from Dallas Jesuit and began studies in science at the University of Dallas. In 1961 he entered the Cistercian monastery, one year before the prep school opened its doors. He earned a doctorate in theology from the Pontifical University of Sant' Anselmo in Rome and began teaching in the prep school in 1968, becoming form master for the last group of boys to enter the Pre-Form (Grade 4). He earned a master's degree in French from Southern Methodist University and became assistant headmaster under Fr. Denis in 1972. Although the fourth to serve as head-



*Fr. Bernard
as teacher and
headmaster, 1985.*

master, Fr. Bernard represents the second generation of administrators in that he began his religious life here in Dallas.

During his 15-year tenure Fr. Bernard saw Cistercian's own alumni take over the leadership roles of those parents who had founded the school. In 1992 the first alumnus enrolled his son in Form I. The alumni also assumed their parents' role in providing for the physical needs of the school. To continue the efforts of building the student body begun by Fr. Denis in 1976, Fr. Bernard needed more classroom space. In 1983 members of the Class of 1974 provided their services in raising the funds for a science building. The alumni, all in their mid-twenties at the time, surprised the whole school community: within less than a year, they had obtained the pledges necessary to begin construction. Ready for use in the fall of 1985, the Science Building provided Cistercian with four new labs, a lecture hall, and eight faculty offices. Representing the alumni, Jere Thompson, Class 1974, handed over to Fr. Bernard and the Cistercian community the new building. The alumni have organized two more building projects: the Abbey Church (1992) and the Library and Art Center (1998). For these last two projects, the fund-raisers, the architect and the contractor were all alumni. The generation of parents that had founded the school were proud, and no doubt relieved, to see their sons and their classmates assuming the roles they had played.

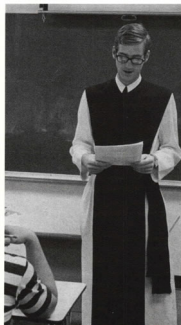
In a sense the administration of the abbey also entered its second generation. In 1988 Abbot Anselm's second six-year term ran out, and the Cistercian community elected Fr. Denis as its superior. Among his first tasks was the sad duty of presiding at the funeral of his predecessor. During his homily Abbot Denis remarked on Abbot Anselm's methodical, dedicated

approach. Abbot Anselm, he recalled, had recommended to him the approach he himself had taken in his graduate math classes: to do all the problems in the textbook, not just those assigned. Some 40 years after Abbot Wendelin of Zirc had sent him to this country, Abbot Anselm had succeeded in establishing the Cistercian monastery thanks to this methodical, dedicated approach. Cistercian monks were still teaching at the University of Dallas, which they had helped establish. The first Cistercian monk to enter the Dallas monastery was now serving as the headmaster of the prep school. The Cistercian community had elected its second abbot according to the constitutions approved under Abbot Anselm's administration. With its foundations set firmly in the Texas soil, the abbey itself was clearly entering its second generation.

Difficulties accompany the establishment of any institution. Like the young parent who had read through the file on the establishment of Cistercian, we must admire the dedication of the lay and Cistercian leaders who remained committed to the dream of a Catholic prep school for boys. Like the second generation of leaders in the abbey and the sons of the school's founding parents, we must also seek to imitate the dedication of the school's founders.



Fr. Daniel Csányi and Michael Healy, Class of 1970, look out from the monastery property toward Dallas, 1962.



Fr. Peter Verhalen, the current headmaster, in his first year of full-time teaching, 1981.

"Well, I think the fact that by the time I am done with this life, the school will simply be continuing to develop; it will not be "finished" when I am "finished." I think this is very exciting and very beautiful as well. It offers us a great lesson about human nature, about the meaning of life and about the fact that we keep on learning about people. It reminds us of what is worthy and what is not worthy of pursuit in this life. Each one of us who has spent at least a decade in the school knows so many parables, so many true stories about what can or cannot happen to a human being; we have learned so much about growing up.

"There is an enormous amount of wisdom that you can pick up just by watching and listening while you go about your own work with the marvelous variety of boys. I get sick and tired of teaching Algebra, I can tell you. Yet, thank God, I could never get tired of teaching the boys. Every class, every generation, is a new experience. That is what makes it worthwhile; that is the exciting part."

*Abbot Denis Farkasfalvy, O. Cist.
Informer interview, February 1996*



What Is There to Remember?

St. Francis Preaching to the Universe.
Fr. Damian Szödenyi, 1983.

"I think that the most important aspect of Cistercian is the spiritual dimension. You don't have the presence of so many clergy in any other school, especially high school, in Dallas. This large percentage of clergy as well as the Form Master system is something that is unique to Cistercian. Your form master gets to know you as well as your family does, and while you may not always appreciate that intimate knowledge as a student, your form master certainly takes a real interest in you and is extremely helpful to your parents. You are his priority. You can't name another school in this part of the world where a teacher can say that getting these boys from fifth grade through senior year is my priority in life. I look back and realize what a great influence it was to have that consistency all the way through school and have it with somebody who is spiritual in nature.

"Finally, in addition to the spiritual form master the academic excellence is also extremely important. It does demand more. It does push you harder. And, yes, there will be times when you'll look around and wish that you were out having fun with you buddies. Now that I can look back, I can say that I'm proud that I did what I did. There was a balance. It was by no means all academic. I think that is what makes Cistercian such a special place, and I think that what the future holds for Cistercian is more of that same consistency and stability which the monks have provided. I think that the Chapel will continue to help the school grow in the spiritual dimension, and become a place where you can physically and symbolically understand what the monks are all about. The school now has a shared space, a sacred space, where the students and monks come together. I think that's very special, and it's been needed for a long time."

Jim Moroney, Class of 1975
Informer interview, January 1996

"Being a human pack rat, I trail behind me a wealth of material possessions which date from my time at CPS and before, but three less tangible items come to mind when I think of what from Cistercian is still a part of me. First, my sense of community remains tightest with my graduating class. A number of us got together this past summer for our ten-year reunion, and we were sitting around, catching up, when a realization hit me: *These people believe in me completely.* And I believe in them; I have known no more remarkable, unquestioningly supportive group since, outside our own families. As a teacher myself, I now also try to incorporate into my own teaching style the best elements of the styles of the many excellent teachers I had at Cistercian, especially those which encourage independent thought and joy in learning. Finally, as an Episcopalian, I always noted the slight liturgical differences in our class masses, and to this day I have to think to keep from pausing between the last two sentences of the Lord's Prayer to let Fr. Roch say, 'Deliver us, Lord, from every evil, and grant us peace in our day...' And, you know, I can half hear him."

Chris Kribs, Class of 1985
Informer interview, January 1996

"I remember a school hidden away in the wilderness. A place, I felt for a long time, that was out of touch with the real world and what was important to survive there. Now I realize that place was in touch with something much deeper. There was a sense of safety there and a discipline that strove to engender inner strength. I remember a boy whose talents were hidden away and would have gone untouched in the real world. I was able to find those talents because of my time in the wilderness of Cistercian."

Paul Molanphy, Class of 1985
Informer interview, January 1996

"When I first began to think analytically, Cistercian offered me moral and religious issues to think about. I'm still thinking about these issues. Thank you, Cistercian, for the monkey. He lives on my back, and he is no longer a burden to me; though other people sometimes get nervous when they see him there."

Geoff Boyd, Class of 1990
Informer interview, January 1996

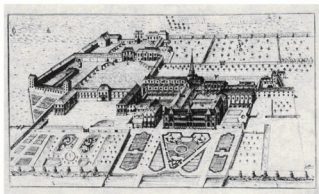
900 Years Later: *Cistercians and the Heritage of Cîteaux Today*

Fr. Julius Lelóczy, O. Cist.

Historical Survey

Religious men or women use acronyms after their names to indicate the Order to which they belong. Those who today call themselves "Cistercians" use two kinds of acronyms, indicating in this way that they belong to two distinct religious orders. The abbreviation used by the Dallas Cistercians is "O. Cist.," meaning "*Ordinis Cisterciensis*" while most other Cistercians in the United States use the letters "O.C.S.O." that signifies "*Ordinis Cisterciensium Strictioris Observantiae*" or "of the Order of the Cistercians of the Strict Observance." The latter group is often referred to as "the Trappists" or, less frequently, "the Reformed Cistercians."

This branching off into two distinct religious orders was the consequence of a long process of separation which abruptly came to its conclusion in 1892. At that date, with the authorization of Pope Leo XIII, three groups of Cistercian monasteries, following a lifestyle that differed from that of the rest of the Order, formed a separate religious Order following the way of life and spiritual tradition developed by the French Abbey *Notre Dame de la Trappe*. Holding a general chapter in Rome in October of 1892, three Trappist congregations declared their union among each other and their separation from the other Cistercian monasteries and elected their first abbot general. The process that resulted in such a decisive outcome, involving the whole history of the Order and based on the diversity of national and cultural backgrounds evolving through history, helps us to understand the way in which the heritage of Cîteaux or "*Cistercium*" lives on today in the



Cîteaux before its destruction during the French Revolution.

modern world.

When the monastery of Cîteaux was started in 1098, none of its founders thought in terms of an "international" future. However, barely half a century later, due to the combined influences of St. Stephen Harding, the third abbot of Cîteaux, and St. Bernard, abbot of Clairvaux, the Cistercians had quickly grown into a worldwide, international network of several hundred houses, many of which contained hundreds of monks. By the end of the 12th century the entire map of the medieval Europe was sprinkled with Cistercian monasteries, reaching from Ireland to the Baltic countries, from Scandinavia to Spain and Sicily, and even into the Holy Land.

The efficiency of the Order was soon handicapped by this quick expansion, especially because its yearly General Chapters, held in Cîteaux, France, were rarely attended by abbots from distant countries. Then in the thirteenth century new religious movements, particularly those of the Franciscans and Dominicans, began to take the lead of the religious scene. While Cistercian vocations decreased, the wide geographic expanse of the Order remained the same. Then, as nationalism began to disintegrate the unity of medieval "Christendom," hostilities and wars made traveling more difficult or even impossible for long periods of time. The Hundred Years War (1337-1453) isolated the monasteries of England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland from France, which was regarded as "enemy territory." The situation became even worse during the Great Schism (1378-1417), a period of forty years in which two popes claimed the power of the Holy See, one living in Avignon (southern France) and one in Rome. Territories following the pope of Rome were politically cut off from France where the pope of Avignon reigned.

Two other historic events also led to the decline of monastic institutions in general and of the Cistercians in particular. First, the periodic outbreaks of the bubonic plague, more commonly called the Black Death, decimated the monasteries where the inhabitants lived in close quarters, the worst outbreak occurring in the period between 1348-1351. About half of the monks and nuns died and many monasteries were completely depopulated. It was also true that during these times of war and plague, isolated monasteries became easy prey as well to marauding bands of robbers and soldiers. Second, the Reformation resulted in the suppression of many monasteries, often on a national scale: in England and in the Scandinavian countries all monasteries were confiscated and suppressed. In Germany, of the 104 Cistercian monasteries forty six fell victim to the Reformation. In France, mostly because of the "Wars of Religion" (1559-1598), 180 Cistercian houses were depopulated. In southeastern Europe the Muslim Turkish expansion destroyed more than twenty Cistercian monasteries: in Hungary in 1526 Cistercian life came to a halt for almost 200 years.

But as happened with so many other aspects of church life, the most lethal blow dealt the monasteries arose out of the corruption of feudal society itself, through an institution named the "commendatory" system. According to its practice, a ruler or the pope often gave an abbey *in commendam* ("in commission") to a layman in return for a monetary contribution or loan. While the layman then received the abbatial title of the monastery along with all its revenues, the prior became the religious superior of the community. Since the nobleman, the "lay abbot," was expected to pay an annual sum for

the support of each monk, he, in order to maximize his revenues, tried to reduce both the number of monks and the amount of their pension, while at the same time spending little or nothing on the upkeep of the buildings. Under such arrangements, monks of formerly well-established abbeys ended up living in material desolation while the once well-furnished buildings fell into disrepair. Numerous monasteries were completely deserted.

Such a litany of disasters makes one wonder how any of these monasteries remained in existence. However, having a knowledge of such adverse circumstances causes one to have an even greater admiration for the reform movements that in the wake of the Council of Trent (1545-1563) gave a renewed vigor to monastic life. In the Cistercian Order the first winds of reform were felt around the year 1600. The initiatives came both from "above" and from "below." The head of the Order, the abbot of Cîteaux, also called the Abbot General, prepared for presentation at the general chapter of 1601 a document for the Order's legislative body which included a plan for an overall reform of Cistercian life. While this plan of a general reform "from above" turned out to be premature, the reform movement started "from below," resulted ultimately in the birth of the Strict Observance.

In 1598, a young nobleman of Italian origin, Octave Arnolfini was appointed by the king as commendatory abbot of the desolate abbey La Charmoye. The pious youth desired to reform his abbey, but realized that such change was possible only if he himself became a Cistercian. Once he had made his novitiate in the abbey of Clairvaux, he returned to his monastery as a monk and abbot. His efforts at reformation were so successful that soon another abbey, that of Châtillon, was also entrusted to him. In 1608, he moved to Châtillon while another like-minded reformer, Étienne Maugier became his successor at La Charmoye. Along with a third companion, Arnolfini and Maugier vowed to carry out a radical monastic reform, the goal of which was to observe all the provisions of the Rule of St. Benedict "without any dispensation," including even the one directing a perpetual abstinence from meat. The reformers then buttressed their resolve with the statement that they would continue their efforts in spite of any eventual resistance from their superiors.

A long struggle ensued as a consequence of this bold platform of reform. Although originally aiming at the reformation of monastic life in France, the conflict soon deteriorated into a power struggle that divided all Cistercian establishments in France into two camps, thereby assuring their continued isolation from the abbeys outside of France. Meanwhile the warring factions published dozens of incriminating pamphlets against each other. At long last, in April of 1666, a papal document (which remained in effect until the French Revolution) was issued defining the norms of daily life in all the monasteries of the Order. According to the pope's decree, all Cistercian communities had to follow the same rule of life, with a single, notable exception, one which divided the order into two segments, those of "the Strict Observance" who, following the provisions of the Rule of St. Benedict, maintained total abstinence from eating meat, and those of "the Common Observance" who kept total abstinence only during Advent and Lent. Consequently, as a result of this papal decree, in France the division of the Order into two observances became permanent.



*Abbot de Rancé, the reformer of
Notre Dame de la Trappe. Hyacinthe
Rigaud, 1696.*

It was in this same context that another wave of monastic reform was initiated by Armand-Jean de Rancé, the commendatory abbot of the dilapidated Cistercian monastery of La Trappe, who at the age of thirty seven experienced a religious conversion, and in 1663 took the Cistercian habit, becoming the regular abbot of the monastery he had received "*in commendam*." Although he introduced the discipline of the Strict Observance, he soon became dissatisfied with it, and initiated a more rigorous lifestyle of his own design which added to the reforms of the "Strict Observance" aspects of a more austere spirituality focusing on penance and mortification. One particular quotation, in which he forbids an ailing monk a visit to the doctor, might serve as a signal to his thought: "The monks should remember that according to the mind of our Holy Father [Benedict] those who professed to follow a solitary lifestyle should dedicate themselves to the continuous meditation of death, consider themselves descended into the sepulcher, and nothing would be farther from their resolution than to think of going anywhere for the sake of curing some malady or recovering their health."¹ Less than hundred years after de Rancé, the abbey of La Trappe, which gave its name to his reforms, obtained a special historical role as it became the only French monastery to survive the French Revolution.

In 1789 the French Revolution had the effect of a social earthquake. It suppressed all monasteries of every religious Order in France, with all the religious being dispersed, imprisoned or, even, in some cases, killed. The Napoleonic wars which followed exported the Revolution and its ideas all over Europe with the result that within a few decades (by the 1840's) most monastic institutions of men were secularized. Only sporadically did some monasteries survive suppression in Austria, Hungary, Spain, Portugal, and Switzerland; later waves of secularization, however, did further damage.

In France, when the decree of suppression was promulgated, twenty-one monks of La Trappe under the leadership of the master of novices Augustine de Lestrange fled into Switzerland. There, in an abandoned Carthusian monastery, he began a new style of "reformed Cistercian life." To atone for the sins of the Revolution, the community began a heroic life of mortification that tested the farthest limits of human endurance. The hardships of their way of life not only went far beyond those imposed by the Rule of St. Benedict and the early Cistercian legislation, but surpassed in severity even de Rancé's reform at La Trappe. Nevertheless, despite their rigorous penitential practices, their spirit could not help reflecting certain of the values of their own time, the period of the Enlightenment: to prove their "usefulness" to society, they opened a school for boys and recruited refugee nuns to run a separate school for girls.

When Switzerland was invaded in 1798 by the French army, Lestrange and his companions had to move on. At the invitation of Czar Paul I of Russia, monks, nuns, teachers and pupils, 254 persons in all, set out on an extraordinary, sixth month pilgrimage to Russia. After their arrival there, since they had no realistic hope to establish a stable monastic community, Lestrange decided, in 1800, to travel with his flock to America. The fantastic adventure ended in 1814 when Napoleon fell from power, and Lestrange with other survivors of his group returned to France and moved back to the abbey La Trappe. As part of the recovery from the excesses of the French Revolution, there occurred a great upsurge of religious fervor which produced so many new vocations that within a few years five former Cistercian monasteries were refounded from La Trappe, all in the spirit and discipline of de Rancé's reform. The Trappist expansion continued throughout the nineteenth century as the Order spread into other European countries and even overseas.

As a consequence of the French Revolution, the whole of the Cistercian Order was dismantled. Yet, in its aftermath, rebirths similar to those of La Trappe, albeit less spectacular, took place as well in other countries. In Italy, six Cistercian monasteries were revived during the 1810's, and they reestablished their centuries' old organization called the "Italian Congregation of St. Bernard." Their head was appointed by the Holy See to carry on the duties of the abbot general for the whole Cistercian Order both inside and outside Italy. Later, two Cistercian monasteries reinstituted their life in the newly created country of Belgium. In France, four Cistercian monasteries formed their union outside of the "Strict Observance" under the name "Congregation of Sénanque." In the Hapsburg empire (Austria, Bohemia, Hungary, and part of Poland) thirteen Cistercian monasteries remained in existence or came to life after a few years of suppression. It was at this time (i.e. in the early 1800's) that in Hungary the Cistercians took over three schools, formerly run by the Jesuits whose order had been suppressed by the Pope in 1773.

Because of the complicated political situation, it was a long time before a convocation of a general chapter for the whole the Order could take place. The first major gathering of abbots which was not a general chapter (only the superiors of the monasteries of Belgium and of the Austro-Hungarian empire convened) was held in Rome in 1869. The purpose of this meeting was to regulate and normalize the relationship of these monasteries with the abbot general. Those assembled expressed their wish that a

general chapter should be held in Rome every tenth year. Fulfilling this wish, however, quickly became impossible when the Papal State was abolished in the creation of the united Italy, a situation which brought new disaster on the Order. Both Cistercian abbeys in Rome were confiscated and converted into military barracks by the newly formed Italian State. The two general chapters of 1880 and 1891 were, therefore, held in Vienna.

When in 1891 the General Chapter convened and elected abbot Leopold Wackarz of Hohenfurt as the next abbot general, the Trappists had already decided (in 1890) to ask for independence. The Holy See initially resisted, but when Sébastien Wyart, known to and respected by both popes Pius IX (1846-1878) and Leo XIII (1878-1903), became the leader of the Trappists, papal approval was easily obtained. In 1892, Pope Leo XIII himself called the Trappists to a separate meeting in Rome. This chapter took two decisive steps: the formation of an independent religious order and the election of Sébastien Wyart as their first Abbot General. The new monastic order was called "Order of Reformed Cistercians of Our Lady of La Trappe."

Today the two Orders represent two collections of monasteries reflecting, on the one hand, a wide diversity of spiritual disciplines, but, on the other hand, the common awareness of carrying the heritage of Cîteaux. While the monastic communities of the "Cistercians of the Strict Observance" are located mostly in French and English speaking countries (or their ancient colonies), the communities of the "Cistercian Order" (and heirs of the Common Observance) are found mainly in German and Italian monasteries, as well as in those in Central Europe (Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic). Until Vatican II, the Strict Observance maintained a high level of external uniformity in lifestyle and discipline, while the Common Observance further developed its traditional legal framework for diversity by grouping its monasteries into quite independent "congregations." It has also expanded from Europe overseas, starting foundations in the early 20th century in Asia (Indochina), the Americas (Canada, US, Brazil, Bolivia) and Africa (Ethiopia, Eritrea).

In the U. S. the first Trappist monastery, Gethsemani, Kentucky, was founded in 1848. It was followed rather quickly by two other foundations, one in New Melleray, Iowa, and the other in Spencer, Massachusetts. Then, after World War II, a true explosion of Trappist foundations took place. Within twelve years the number of Trappist monasteries rose from three to twelve. The Common Observance has founded three abbeys in North America: one at Spring Bank (later transferred to Sparta) in Wisconsin, one at Rouge-mont in French Canada, and, after World War II, one in Irving, Texas (the Abbey of Our Lady of Dallas).

The Second Vatican Council inspired in both orders an important process of updating (*aggiornamento*). During the late 1960's each of the two orders convoked a series of general chapters in order to carry out this process of updating which then had two effects. On the one hand, it precipitated a crisis which led to an exodus of many members, though this loss was more pronounced in the communities of the Strict Observance. As a result of four general chapters, the old uniformity within the Strict Observance was replaced by a greater freedom in choosing disciplinary and liturgical customs.

On the other hand, while the contemplative character of Trappist life remained largely unaffected, the communities of the Strict Observance began to move away from the spirit of de Rancé and to increase their interest in both intellectual life and in the study of early Cistercian sources. In addition, in the Common Observance, the process of the *aggiornamento* clarified many of the basic priorities of monastic life for the Order and, in this context, the traditional values of monasticism gained new ground. In a further and more recent development, both Orders have integrated into their governance the active participation of the nuns. Yet, just as before, the Orders remained separate legal entities although they hold much in common in their shared spiritual and liturgical heritage.

Statistical Summary

One can illustrate the facts described above with statistical data. Since the ravages of the French Revolution, the highest number of monks and nuns in both orders was reached in 1962, a fact which illustrates the religious fervor that followed World War II. In that year, the Strict Observance numbered 4339 religious men and 1952 women, while 1648 men and 1600 women belonged to the Common Observance. In 1996, the Strict Observance counted only 2571 men (a drop of 41%) living in 93 monasteries and 1754 (a drop of 10%) women in 65 houses. In 1997 the Common Observance had 1389 men (a drop of 16%) in 78 houses and 1100 women (a drop of 31 %) in 63 houses.

The geographical distribution of the monasteries of men of the two Cistercian orders can be best shown on a comparative table:

MONASTERIES OF O. C. S. O.

Country	# of houses
France	16
U. S. A.	12
Spain	8
Belgium	6
Ireland	5
Netherlands	5
Canada	5
United Kingdom	3
China	3
Italy	2
Japan	2
Cameroon	2
Congo	2
21 countries	1

MONASTERIES OF O. Cist.

Country	# of houses
Italy	10
Austria	9
Vietnam	6
Germany	5
Brazil	5
Hungary	4
Ethiopia	4
Poland	4
U. S. A.	4
Spain	3
Switzerland	2
Belgium	2
France	2
Czech Rep.	2
Eritrea	2
3 countries	1

There are 21 countries which possess only one monastery of the Strict Observance. These are spread all over the globe, 6 being located in Latin America (Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Mexico, Venezuela, Dominican Republic), 6 in Africa (Algeria, Kenya, Madagascar, Angola, Benin, Nigeria), 3 in Europe (Austria, Germany, Bosnia), 3 in Asia (Israel, Indonesia, Philippines), and 3 in Oceania (New Zealand, Australia, New Caledonia). For the Common Observance there are three countries with only one monastery (Canada, Slovenia and Netherlands).

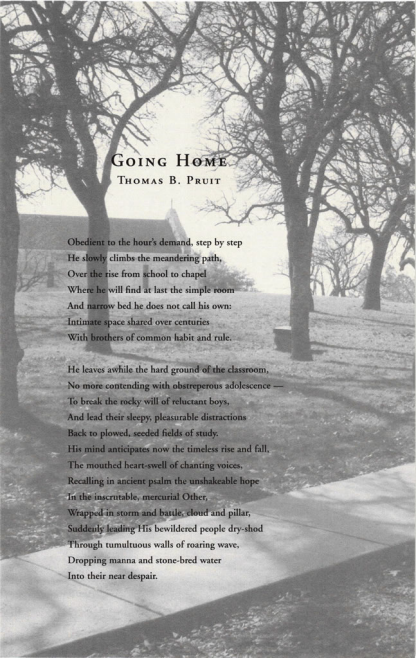
The comparative table of the monasteries of women of the two Orders shows a similar great variety of countries:

MONASTERIES OF O.C.S.O.		MONASTERIES OF O. Cist.	
Country	# of houses	Country	# of houses
France	15	Spain	23
Spain	9	Italy	12
Belgium	6	Germany	7
Japan	5	Switzerland	5
U. S. A.	5	Austria	3
Canada	2	Brazil	3
Italy	2	Bolivia	2
Congo	2	France	2
19 countries	1	Hungary	2
		4 countries	1

In 19 countries the Strict Observance has only one monastery in each: five of them are in Africa (Benin, Uganda, Cameroon, Nigeria, Angola), four in Asia (Indonesia, South Korea, Philippines, India), five in Europe (Switzerland, United Kingdom, Ireland, Netherlands, Germany), and five in Latin America (Mexico, Argentina, Chile, Venezuela, Ecuador). The Common Observance has only one monastery in each of the following four countries: United States, Belgium, Denmark and the Czech Republic.

Besides the communities listed here, there are an additional 26 Cistercian monasteries of women in Spain which, while officially they are part of the Common Observance, for all practical purposes do not belong to either of the two Orders. Their organization is called "Congregación Cisterciense de San Bernardo Las Huelgas."

¹ *Constitutiones et Acta Capitulorum Strictioris Observantiae Ordinis Cisterciensis (1624-1687)*. Ed. by Julius D. Leloczky. Rome, 1967. Ed. Cistercienses. See footnote 11 on page 70.

A black and white photograph of a park-like setting. In the foreground, there are several large, leafless trees with intricate branch structures. A paved path or walkway runs across the lower part of the image. In the background, a building with a prominent steeple, possibly a church or school, is visible through the trees. The overall atmosphere is quiet and contemplative.

GOING HOME

THOMAS B. PRUIT

Obedient to the hour's demand, step by step
He slowly climbs the meandering path,
Over the rise from school to chapel
Where he will find at last the simple room
And narrow bed he does not call his own:
Intimate space shared over centuries
With brothers of common habit and rule.

He leaves awhile the hard ground of the classroom,
No more contending with obstreperous adolescence —
To break the rocky will of reluctant boys,
And lead their sleepy, pleasurable distractions
Back to plowed, seeded fields of study.
His mind anticipates now the timeless rise and fall,
The mouthed heart-swell of chanting voices,
Recalling in ancient psalm the unshakeable hope
In the inscrutable, mercurial Other,
Wrapped in storm and battle, cloud and pillar,
Suddenly leading His bewildered people dry-shod
Through tumultuous walls of roaring wave,
Dropping manna and stone-bred water
Into their near despair.



As he tops the rise, the massive walls of stone,
Stark, striated blocks narrowly cut by glass and light,
Greet him in austere silence, keeping their vigil,
Protecting the sacred space within.
There, vivacious hope burgeons, lifting the very roof,
Then settling downward like a word-laden dove.
In his mind's eye he sees the chancelled monks
Mulling the sounds of Scripture, inwardly digesting
The Word in prayer and song.

Over the rise he now descends toward the chapel,
His frail mortality fallen into the same convoluted web
Of mindless hurt and self-deceit as all human flesh;
Nevertheless, he braves the chapel doors to encounter
Cradled in brass and wood and stone,
The drought-ending Bread, Despair's destroyer,
Who, now from beneath His crown of thorns,
Woos His pilgrim with a single, piercing choice.

Over and over in his daily rounds, his stable familiars,
Like temple doors, usher him before the Presence,
Exposing his choice to the eye of the Potter,
Whose perfecting hand remolds flawed vessels
On the living table of His own creation.

Thus, moving across crowded parking lots
Toward automobiles and blaring traffic,
Into the noisy clog of our distraction,
We seek a gateway through our rutted days,
Temple doors to release us into a rush of delight,
Where with faithful abandon the Lover awaits,
Eager to ravish —

and reveal that we are home.

The Simplicity of God

Simplicity of Art

"Loving art is the recognition of your own desire for beauty. You love it because it is in your soul and you recognize it—not exactly the same, not 100 percent photocopied, but still you recognize it. You make art under the direct influence of the divine within yourself. All great art has a religious influence, a divine attraction toward the infinite...every artist must be to some extent God-believing.

"Simplicity is very important — simplicity in concept, simplicity in workmanship, simplicity in attitude and understanding. God is simple, and the only way we can understand this warm simple God is through simplicity also."

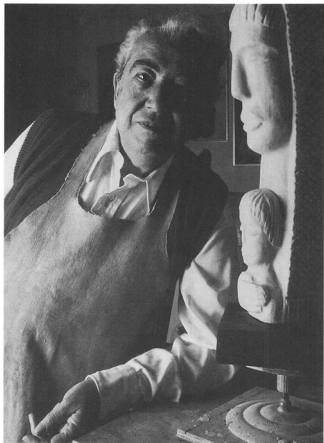
While he considers each one of his artworks important, Father Damian is never confident any of his works are great or perfect. In fact, when he begins a painting or sculpture, he often has no concrete final product in mind. On occasion, he goes back to work on a piece after not having touched it for several years.

"I really don't finish anything," he said. "I stop when I get the effect I'm going for. Sometimes I don't even know what I'm doing until I do it.

"You don't run out of ideas, but you run out of time," Father Damian said. "We have to always keep going, in an explosion, in fire.

"I think I have reached something in art. I think I have reached a point where art causes me nothing but pleasure. I don't worry about success, or how much I'm worth. Whatever I do in art, it can only make me happy."

*Fr. Damian Szödényi, O. Cist.
Informer interview, February 1990*



*Fr. Damian Szűcs
in his monastery workshop.*

*Veiled Madonna and Child.
1984*

The Biblical Spirituality of Early Cîteaux

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As we approach the celebration of the 900th anniversary of the foundation of Cîteaux, it appears increasingly important to appraise the main elements of the spirituality which motivated the minds and hearts of the first founders. However, because of a lack of reliable original texts, historians are doubtful even as to the exact sequence of events that led to the foundation, not to mention the ideas that the founders had in mind.

It seems, nevertheless, that from the modest amount of authentic sources available, one can extract some valuable information if close attention is paid to the way these founders used the Bible when speaking of their daily affairs, basic goals and organization of life.

Our founders belonged to a time in which it was habitual to express one's theological heritage and orientation by referring to biblical images and vocabulary, by referring in this way to the key concepts of the monastic heritage which motivated their undertaking. As scarce as the early documents coming from the founders of Cîteaux are, they abound in biblical phrases and allusions, which most likely act as indicators of the spiritual pedigree of their authors.

Since this method of research brings best results when dealing with cumulative evidence, rather than analyzing individual fragments of texts, I intend to assemble some blocks of raw material in order to point out the basic concepts which appear in them. Furthermore, I will attach each of these blocks to a biblical word or expression.¹

1) *Novitas*

There is no doubt that the monastery of Cîteaux was first called *Novum Monasterium*. There are good indications that this name was chosen with the intention of referring to a *new kind* of institution, for very soon after the foundation the founders appear quite defensive about the novelty which their monastery represented both by name and reality.

In medieval usage the biblical concept of "novelty" is quite ambiguous. In biblical vocabulary, a new man, a new life, a new spirit, etc., means, of course, something of high value, but, according to the Pastoral epistles, also attributed to Paul, to introduce "novelties" (*novitates* and thus the words *innovare* or *innovatio*, cf. 1 Tim 6:20) have a negative connotation. That the founders of the "Novum Monasterium" were accused of innovation is reflected in the letter of Hugh, Archbishop of Lyons to Pope Paschal II. He writes that the brothers of Molesme were displeased by the efforts of the founders of Cîteaux: "for they thought that they would be despised by the world, if these particular and new types of monks were allowed to live among them" (*si isti quasi singulares et novi monachi inter eos habitare videantur*).² Thus, according to the archbishop, the monks of the *Novum Monasterium* need the protection of the Holy See because their being *singulares et novi monachi* provoked hostility among the monks of the region.



Christ and the Twelve Minor Prophets of the Old Testament from a manuscript of early Cîteauxc.

Interestingly, the word *singularis* which we may translate in our modern idioms as “special” or “exceptional” is also ambiguous. Ancient prayers and sermons, for example, would use the word *singularis* to describe God’s special gifts,³ the best known example being *virgo singularis* in the hymn *Ave maris stella*. Yet equally known is the caricature which St. Bernard created of the vice called *singularitas* in his earliest treatise *De gradibus humilitatis*, closely contemporary with the *Exordium Parvum*. In other words, being *singularis et novus* is a very ambiguous compliment for a monk of the early 12th century, an age marked by reverence for what is old and authentic.

The *Exordium Parvum* comes to the defense of the novelty achieved by the founders with the help of a Pauline verse: *Exuti ergo veterem hominem, novum se induisse gaudebant*. [“After having taken off the old man, they rejoiced of having put on the new.”] The sentence is actually an abbreviated quotation of Eph 4:22-24. Further down in the same chapter of the *Exordium Parvum*, the founders are called *novi milites Christi*.⁴ We might see here a term alluding either to the military imagery of the Pauline epistles, or merely to the Rule.⁵ One might even consider that this as a forerunner of St. Bernard’s famous title for his treatise on the Templars, *De laude novae militiae*, though in any case, here the military aspect remains of little importance, the emphasis being, clearly, on novelty.

What novelty? The context surrounding the sentence speaks of the poverty of the founders: “the new soldiers of Christ, intent to be poor with the poor Christ, began to discuss among themselves by what ingenuity they could support themselves and their guests, rich and poor alike.” (*Coeperunt novi milites Christi, cum paupere Christo pauperes, inter se tractare quo ingenio... in hac vita se hospitesque divites at pauperes supervenientes... sustentarent.*) The word *pauper* shows up three times in this sentence. The phrase *cum paupere Christo pauperes* appears as a program coined from biblical notions. The underlying verse is 2 Cor 8:9 which states that Christ “became poor for our sake although he was rich so that by his poverty you may become rich.” Some may doubt of this reference because the scriptural text of the Vulgate uses a vocabulary different from that of the *Exordium Parvum*: *egenus* instead of *pauper* and *inopia* rather than *paupertas*. But the reference is correct and closer than first suspected, for in the patristic use of 2 Cor 8:9 the wording of Old Latin translation (*Vetus Latina*) is retained in this form: “*pauper factus est cum esset dives ut eius paupertate nos ditaremur*.”⁶ It was from this variant of the Pauline verse that the expression *pauper Christus* and the slogan *pauperes cum Christo paupere* entered the usage of the founders and became almost like a manifesto for a reform of religious life in the 12th century, and also later, when the reform peaked in the Franciscan movement.

The abandonment of the name *Novum Monasterium* in favor of *Sanctae Mariae de Cistercio*⁷ and its variants⁸ happened in the year 1119 for reasons that must have included also the troubles created by the founders’ claim of novelty and innovation. In the early 12th century, the ecclesial climate measured the truthfulness of reforms or customs by their antiquity. The name *novum* must have led to continued misunderstandings or misinterpretations. As far as I know, St. Bernard succeeded in clarifying this matter: in his vocabulary *novitas* is always positive and joyful; but he rejects and deplores innovations — like those of Abelard — as contrary to authentic traditions.

2) *Servire*

The term *servire Deo* appears with some frequency in the ancient documents of Cîteaux. Though it may appear at first glance to be an overused term with no special significance, a closer look proves that not to be the case. *Servire Deo* is a New Testament term. In the Vulgate the Old Testament, it usually appears as *servire Domino*, where *Domino* stands for YHWH with its usual connotation of the God of Israel. In the New Testament, on the other hand, there are only a few important passages in which the expression *servire Deo* is descriptive of the program of Christian life. The identity of the Greek original is not readily available: *servire* in the Vulgate translates as either *latreuein* or *doulein*. But even so we have altogether six or seven texts to deal with. Only one of them is found in the Gospels: "you cannot serve both God and Mammon" (*Mt* 6:24; *Lk* 16:13), while the rest occur in the Pauline letters, two in *Romans* (1:9; 6:22), one in *Philippians* (3:3) one in *First Thessalonians* (1:9) and one in *Hebrews* (9:4). The Rule of St. Benedict, of course, uses the concept in the expression *dominici schola servitii*, but does not use the formula *servire Deo* for describing the program of monastic life.⁹

Some early Cistercian texts focus on this expression. The *Exordium Parvum* spells out the goal of the founders *die ac nocte Deo servire* ["to serve God day and night"].¹⁰ At first one thinks that this refers to *Acts* 26:27 where Paul is quoted as speaking of the hope of Israel which the twelve tribes want to attain as *in perseverantia nocte ac die deservientes* ["in perseverance by serving night and day"]. A second conjecture is *Lk* 2:37 about the prophetess Anna who stayed in the Temple *serviens die ac nocte* ["serving day and night"]. But the closest biblical parallel — and the probable source — is *Rev* 7:15 where the elect are said to have washed their clothes white in the blood of the Lamb and therefore are in front of God's throne, "serving him day and night." (*Ideo sunt ante thronum Dei et servant ei die ac nocte in templo eius.*)



The Spiritual Combat.
The initial R from a manuscript
of early Cîteaux.

Not only is this verse our closest parallel,¹¹ but it attests to a remarkable consistency in the early spirituality of Cîteaux. Most Cistercians know about the legend made famous by the *Exordium Magnum* about a cleric named Alberic who saw in a dream a group of fourteen monks at a river washing their habits. Inquiring about the meaning of this dream, Alberic was advised to go to Cîteaux where he recognized the same monks whom he had seen in his dream. He entered Cîteaux, later became its prior and then possibly abbot of Morimond. Because of its multiple attestation, this legend seems to be based on a true story which took place before 1104.¹² The surprising but unintended convergence between the *Exordium Parvum*'s use of Rev 7:15 and the key role that the same passage plays in Alberic's dream seem to indicate that we are dealing here with fragments of a tradition linking, in the minds of the early witnesses, the ideal of the founders of Cîteaux with this scene of the *Book of Revelation*.

Put back into its biblical context, this ideal expressed in the phrase "*servire Deo*" has a strong liturgical connotation, as it refers to the ideal of a *laus perennis*. But this must not be reduced to a mere wish of participating day and night in the eternal liturgy of the Lamb. The idea of *servire Deo* reveals a further depth as it appears in the context of the *monitum* attached to his new Bible by Stephen Harding. As is commonly known, Stephen Harding stands out with his enterprise of correcting the Vulgate and editing a Bible based on the *Hebraica Veritas*. What disturbed him were the interpolations of the Septuagint which had been preserved in certain Latin manuscripts but were missing from others. To make textual corrections, he consulted Jewish Rabbis who helped him in Old French (*lingua Romana*) to bring his Bible closer to the Masoretic text. This *monitum* attached by Stephen to his Bible is an open letter for all present and future monks of the *Novum Monasterium*. In this document, dated from 1109, Stephen addresses these monks, speaking to them as *praesentibus et futuris servis Dei*. This shows again that for him the title *servus Dei* was a simple and concise description of the monastic vocation as he conceived it.¹³

The opening sentences of the *Carta Caritatis Prior* reflect the same concept of "serving God" as the essence of the monastic vocation, but inserts it into a concise biblical collage:

Since we all recognize ourselves as useless servants of the one true king and Lord and master, therefore of the abbots or of our brother monks whom at different places God's goodness through us, wretched men, has ordered under the discipline of the Rule, we shall not demand any earthly advantage or delivery of temporal goods.¹⁴

Though much, of course, could be said about this sentence, I will list only a few of the basic ideas. First, as a principle, it is stated that monks and abbots should not engage in exploitation of others by exacting either labor or material things. Second, this principle is based on the understanding that we "all are servants,"¹⁵ to which a quotation from Lk 17:10 is added: we are useless servants — *servi inutiliter* — so that even the title of being God's servants could not become a reason for pride or domination.

Third, Christ whom we all serve is described as king, lord and master. Here the feudal image of king is masterfully balanced by the Johannine image of *dominus et magister*, the title which Jesus used at the Last Supper. It is connected to the washing of the feet and the command of love: "If I, who am Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you must do the same to each other" (Jn 13:14).

Fourth, there is also in this sentence a precious compendium of the ancient Cistercian spiritual heritage that speaks of humility, of the renunciation of riches, greed, and exploitation, as well as of the obligation to serve others, not only other monks but all people. For the text continues by saying: "Since we wish to be of us to these and to all the children of Holy Church, we order that no action be taken that might either be a burden to them or diminish their possessions."¹⁶

Fifth, the sentence just quoted ends with a rather strong condemnation of ecclesial greed by saying *ne dum nos abundantes de eorum paupertate esse cupimus, avaritiae malum, quod secundum apostolum idolorum servitus esse comprobatur, evitare non possimus*. ["so that by wishing to obtain abundance from their poverty, we would not be able to avoid the evil of greed which is, according to the Apostle, the service of idols."] Here a combination of *Eph* 5:5 and *Col* 2:5 is quoted and is taken out of its context so that it becomes the antithesis of the very first sentence quoted above. By yielding to greed we defeat the purpose of monasticism, for we become "servants of idols" rather than servants of the true God who must be "our King, our Lord and Master."

Sixth, one must not, in addition, lose sight of the fact that in this paragraph "abbots and our brother monks" (*abbatibus et confratribus nostris monachis*) are put on the same level since all are servants of the same Lord. Furthermore, the text points out that abbots are elected and installed by us most wretched men (*miserrimos homines*). Thus a great awareness is expressed that ultimately God's goodness (*Dei pietas*) and not human wisdom or constitutional rights are the source of abbatial authority.

All this discussion may well reflect the personal attitudes and spirituality of Stephen Harding. In the few authentic documents that have survived from his pen, he calls himself twice the servant rather than abbot of his monastery: *frater Stephanus Novi Monasterii minister*,¹⁷ *cisterciensis ecclesiae servus*.¹⁸

3) Concluding Remarks Inviting Further Research

The length of this presentation does not allow the possibility of going into more details, yet I would like to list a few matters that deserve similar research. First, the theme of *spiritualis militia* has many formulations in our sources¹⁹ using texts and terms of St. Paul. Already in the biblical sources this topic is combined with athletic imagery. Our sources use a Pauline terminology of the race (*cursus*),²⁰ of running (*currere*)²¹ and the prize for winners (*bravium*).²²

In addition, there is a most fascinating letter by Stephen Harding, discovered by C.H. Talbot in 1936²³ which Harding wrote two or three years before his death to the monks of Sherborne, the English monastery from which he exited on his pilgrimage which brought him first to Molesme, then to Cîteaux. This document expresses a deep sense of satisfaction about what God's mercy has accomplished through him. It contains many biblical



Stephen Harding (left) and another abbot offering their monasteries to the protection of Our Lady. From a 12th century manuscript.

allusions: comparisons with Moses, with Abraham, with the figure of St. Paul as a *vas electum* (in the sense of container, rather than instrument), and others. But the end of the letter is especially precious. It reads as follows:

And now, I who left my land alone and poor, enter the destiny of all flesh rich and accompanied by a crowd of forty. I securely await the one denarius promised for the laborers who faithfully worked in the vineyard.²⁴

I quote this passage mostly because of the last allusion to the parable of the vineyard (*Mt* 20:1-14). As if preoccupied with the same image, the Preamble of the *Exordium Parvum* quotes the same parable but in a rather awkward way. The founders, speaking in first person plural ("we the first founder of the community of Cîteaux") remind the readers saying: "we were the ones who carried the burden and heat of the day." In terms of the parable this means that the founders identify themselves with the servants who were hired "in the first hour." The words they quote are ill-suited for their message because they use the terms of the complaint raised by the first laborers when realizing that they would be paid no more than anyone else: all will get one "denarius." So they murmur: "we were the ones who carried the burden and heat of the day" (20:12). Stephen's letter stands in a strong, and maybe conscious contrast with this text of the *Exordium*. For he points out that, although he had set out on his mission all alone (*solus... egressus sum*) now, enriched by a crowd of forty — the forty monasteries issued from Cîteaux — he is about to die and obtain his promised *denarius* — just one, like anybody else — as his one and indivisible reward which is God himself.²⁵

There are many more such biblical topics in the most ancient documents of Cîteaux, topics which made their appearance right at the beginning of the Cistercian origins but obtained further increase of significance only through their association with other and more biblical documentation in later times. I give two more examples.

i) The first is the expression of *quies* representing monastic life style. This term appears in various contexts and is obviously complex. It is sometimes a purely external, sometimes a legal, sometimes a practical or environmental term. Its spiritual references are often vague. The recurrence of the theme is, however, quite frequent, and is found most often in correspondence with episcopal and papal authorities.²⁶

But the concept of *quies* is clearly part of a spirituality which finally, in the works of St. Bernard, — specifically in his *De conversione ad clericos* — obtains unsuspected theological meaning and depth. Bernard must have become acquainted in some way, probably through reading the works of St. Ambrose,²⁷ with a very ancient tradition attached to *Gen* 4:7 and an old Latin translation (*Vetus Latina*) of this verse based on the LXX.

Gen 4:7 is a divine oracle from heaven, addressed to Cain after he has killed his brother. The LXX translates it by two words which the old Latin version renders as *Peccasti? Quiesce* ["Did you sin? Calm down"] Bernard uses this verse and even more the patristic tradition attached to it, to explain that the first step of conversion must be a separation from one's sinful self. *Quiesce* thus means in this context both "calm down" and "quit" or "settle" or, in

other words, to stop sinning and change your way of life. In Bernard's understanding, therefore, *quies* signifies not just an external condition but the whole context of conversion. To reach such a *quies* we ought to make a clean break with our old ways of life. The monastic *quies* means separation from a sinful environment as well as from a sinful past and all the tumult that comes from sinful memories, passions, and lack of internal peace. It signifies part of a spiritual program to be carried out in the secluded and disciplined environment of the monastery. Bernard, with his genius for interiorization, inserted this concept of "quies" into an elaborate teaching on conversion.

ii) The second example is the word *eremum* and *desertum*, hermitage or desert. It is not clear what sense the *eremum* originally had in reference to the *Novum Monasterium*. The arguments are complicated. There is some evidence that St. Robert's original monastery had to be moved from its original site to its later location of Cîteaux, close to an ancient road. Yet even the original place was not an abandoned site, for there already existed a chapel at its place. In any case, early Cistercian sources soon created the connection with the Judean desert to which John the Baptist and then Jesus himself retired. Allusion is made to *Mk* 1:13, according to which Jesus lived in the desert "among wild animals." Thus, the significance of the term is enriched in order to invoke the example of Jesus and his lifestyle. In any case, the monks quickly civilized Cîteaux since early documents refer back to the past by saying that only *illo tempore*, in its beginnings, was the place deserted and not fit for human habitation. The language used in this context endows the memory of the founders with a heroic glow, but it also urges the new generations of Cistercians to deepen the spiritual meaning of the desert as a place to combat Satan who goes around as a roaring lion (cf. *1 Pet* 5:8), a specific wild beast to confront.

All this development reached its peak in the combined expression of the *Exordium Cistercii* and the *Summa Cartae Caritatis*.²⁸ For there the *eremum* of Cîteaux becomes, in terms of *Dent* 32:10 *locus horrois et vastae solitudinis* ["a place of horror and vast solitude"].²⁹ With this quotation the image of the "desert" is attached to a key text of the Pentateuch, and brings to mind not only the life of St. Anthony and other Egyptian monks, but the whole saga of Israel's journey in the desert, a great spiritual topic connected with many more Old Testament texts used in early Christian typology. In this way, with the help of St. Paul (*1 Cor* 10:1-12), we come to realize that the beginnings of Cîteaux are a paradigm for our monastic life's journey through the desert. The *exordium* of Cîteaux becomes like the exodus of Israel from Egypt, a spiritual model that "happened for the instruction of us, for whom the end of the ages have arrived" (*1 Cor* 10:12).

I hope that these examples give us sufficient reason to begin to explore further the biblical imagery used by the founders of Cîteaux as a tool of research for studying their spirituality. The use of their favorite biblical passages and images must be creatively rediscovered and continued in order to help establish in the context of contemporary life, for each of our communities, a *Novum Monasterium* — a renewed monastery.

¹ For the critical text of the earliest documents concerning the Cistercian Order, I used J. Marilier, *Chartes et documents concernant l'Abbaye de Cîteaux, 1098-1182*, (Bibliotheca Cisterciensis I), Roma 1961, to be quoted from here on as Marilier, and Jean de la Croix Bouton - Jean Baptiste Van Damme, *Les plus anciens textes de Cîteaux*, (Cîteaux - Commentarii Cistercienses - Studia et Documenta - vol. II) Achel 1974, to be quoted hereafter as Bouton.

² *Exordium Parvum* XII,1. The letter is to be dated to 1100, but its exact wording could have undergone change during the composition of the *Exordium Parvum* (Cf. Marilier 47; Bouton 72).

³ Cf. H. Barré, *Prières anciennes de l'Occident à la Mère du Sauveur, Des origines à saint Anselme*, Paris 1963 with examples - all prior to the 12th century - on pp. 45 (*virgo singularis*), 52 (*singulare meritum*), 67, (*singularis sanctitas*), 75 (*singulare meritum*), 136 (*singularis gratia*), 161 (*singulare meritum*), 184 (*singularis virgo*), 220 (*singulare privilegium*), 304 (*o femina mirabiliter singularis et singulariter mirabilis*).

⁴ *Exordium Parvum* XV, Bouton 77.

⁵ *Christo vero regi militaturus* Prol 3; *oboedientiae militanda* Prol 40; *militans sub regula* 1:2; *lex sub qua militare vis* 58:10; *uni regi militatur* 61:10.

⁶ Cf. e. gr. in the sermons of St. Augustine edited by G. Morin (vol. I, pp. 24, 77, 193).

⁷ Marilier 39.IX. This document is supposedly from 1113, but there are signs that the wording of the copy lacks precision. In any case, the other eight documents belonging to the same group of donations (Marilier 39. I- V, pp. 60-61) use the expression *Nori Monasterii* or *sanctae Mariae Nori Monasterii*. *Sanctae Mariae de Cistercio* also appears in another document not precisely dated, Marilier 58 (p.73). The chart of foundation of Preuilly in 1118 still has *Novum Monasterium*.

⁸ The foundation chart of Bonnevaux from 1119 has *fratres a Cistercio* and *Cisterciensi instituto* (Marilier 65, p. 78-79); a document of 1119 reads *sanctae Mariae de Cistercio* (Marilier 67, p. 80); Pope Callixtus' confirmation of the *Charta Caritatis* on December 23, 1119 has *Cisterciensis monasterii* (Marilier 69, p. 82); another, slightly later document has *sanctae Mariae apud Cistercium* (Marilier 79, p. 87); documents from 1130-1140 have *beatae Mariae Cisterciensi* (Marilier 81, p. 88) or *sanctae Mariae Cisterciensi* (Marilier 82, p. 88); *Cisterciensis ecclesia* (Marilier 88, p. 91) or *sanctae Mariae Cistercii* (Marilier 93, p.95).

⁹ The only close parallel is *uni Domino servimus* in *Reg Ben* 65:10. But here, obviously, the emphasis is on *uni* not on *servire*, and the name of God is *Dominus*.

¹⁰ Chapter XVII, Bouton 81.

¹¹ This can be seen by the context: the sentence of the *Exordium Parvum* speaks "of God's house" in which the monks want to serve God day and night and thus must keep special purity of observance. *Rev* 7:15 speaks of "God's temple" in which he is served day and night by those who washed their robes in the Lamb's blood.

¹² Cf. Bouton 80-1, note 2.

¹³ Cf. Marilier 32 (p. 56).

¹⁴ *Quia unus veri regis et domini et magistri nos omnes servos licet inutiles esse cognoscimus, idcirco abbatibus et confratribus nostris monachis quos per diversa loca Dei pietas per nos miserissimos hominum sub regulari disciplina ordinaverit, nullam terrenae commoditatis seu rerum temporalium exactionem imponimus.* *Prologue*, Bouton 91.

¹⁵ There is here an implicit quotation of the Rule: *quia in omni loco uni Domino servitur, uni regi militatur.* *Reg. Ben.* LXI, 10.

¹⁶ *Prodesse enim illis omnibusque sanctae ecclesiae filiis capientes nil quod eos gravet, nil quod eorum substantiam minuat, erga eos agere disponimus.* The expression "Holy Church" means here

the universal church not the community of a particular abbey or the sum total of the Cistercians.

17 Marilier 31 (p. 55).

18 Marilier 88 (p. 91). Such a language of humility is not unique at this time. Abbot Henry of St. John of the Angels, in a document of donation written before 1131, calls himself "*Henricus, servus Angeliacensis indignus*." (Marilier 95)

19 *Dei misericordia qui hanc militiam spiritualem suis inspiravit*. *Exordium Parvum* XVI (Bouton 80).

20 *cursum suum consummarent*. *Exordium Parvum* XVII (Bouton 82). Cf. 2 Tim 4:17 (*cursum consummavi*).

21 *postea illuc currere* *Exordium Parvum* XVII (Bouton 82); (*Albericus*) *non in vacuum incurrit* *Exordium Cistercii* II (Bouton 113). Cf. Gal 2:2 (*ne in vacuum currerem vel incurrissem*) but more closely Phil 2:16 (*non in vacuum cucurri*).

22 *vir Dei Albericus supernae vocationis bravium... apprehendit*. Cf. Phil 3:14.

23 Marilier 88 (p. 91).

24 *Nunc enim qui solus de terra mea et pauper egressus sum, dives et cum XL turbis viam universae carnis laetus ingredior, securus expectans denarium operarius fideliter in vinea laborantibus repromissum*.

25 The letter ends encouraging the monks of Sherborne to endure up to the end "so that you may see the God of Gods" (*ut Deum deorum videre mereamini*.)

26 *quietius Domino famulari*. "Exordium Parvum II (Bouton 58); *pacem et quietem molesmensi ecclesiae posse restitui*. *Exordium Parvum* VII (Bouton 64); *sub apostolicae protectionis alis quieta et tuta*. *Exordium Parvum* X (Bouton 69); *Petunt enim ... de quiete et suae religionis stabilitate*. *Exordium Parvum* XI (Bouton 71); *eos inquietare non desinunt; ab hac infestatione et inquietudine liberando*. *Exordium Parvum* XII (Bouton 72); *in suae quietis tutelam a vestra flagitant pietate*. *Exordium Parvum* XIII (Bouton 74); *locum illum quem inhabitandum pro quiete monastica elegistis*. *Exordium Parvum* XIV (Bouton 74); *si qua persona... tamquam monasticae religionis et quietis perturbatrix*. *Privilegium Papae Callixti* (Bouton 104).

27 *De paenitentia* II, 11 (*Sacrae christiannes* 179,196). Cf. D. Farkasfalvy "The First Step in Spiritual Life: Conversion": *La dottrina della vita spirituale nelle opere di San Bernardo* (*Atti del Convegno Internazionale, Roma 11-15 settembre, 1990*) 73-74.

28 The dating of this document is controversial. Because of its biblical rhetoric, I am inclined to Leopold Grill's thesis who wanted to attribute this text to St. Bernard. Cf. "Der hl. Bernhard als bisher unerkannter Verfasser des Exordium Cistercii und der Summa Cartae Caritatis": *Cistercienser Chronik* 1959 (49/50) 43-57.

29 Bouton 111.

St. Bernard's School of Spirituality

Fr. Roch Kereszty, O. Cist.

In the second half of our century St. Bernard's school of spiritual life has become the object of personal interest and scholarly research for a growing number of lay people far beyond the walls of Cistercian monasteries. They have begun to discover his relevance for their own spiritual lives. Here I would like to present some traits of Bernard as teacher as well as a few of the many themes which may explain why, after nine hundred years, his teaching is so alive and attractive today.

1. St. Bernard as Teacher

Isaac of Stella, himself a Cistercian abbot and a saint who knew Bernard personally, may start us out on the right track toward gaining insight into the character of the man Bernard:

We have seen a human being who had in him something that was surely above a human being. Some people, stung by his actions or reprimands, grumbled against him in his absence; yet, some kind of love-inspiring divine majesty and awe-inspiring love were glowing on his face, at once so reassuring



St. Bernard preaching on the Song of Songs. Miniature from a 15th century psalter.

ing and so terrifying and such grace was poured out upon his lips that, at the sight of him, they were spell-bound; they would reproach themselves for having reproached him, and loved, praised, and acclaimed everything in him. His holy soul was truly overflowing with delights as it is easy to perceive in his writings, especially in what he said about the *Song of Songs*. I am speaking about Saint Bernard, abbot of Clairvaux. Thus, upon those to whom, when absent, he was "sun" and "moon and a terrifying army," he poured out, when present, the delights with which he himself was always overflowing. To everyone he appeared so terrifying in his love and so love-inspiring in his terror, that, at his word or rebuke, no one ever became discouraged, no one was ever stung by impatience or consumed by envy. (*Sermo* 52, 15)

Isaac had no idea of how Rudolph Otto would describe the experience of the sacred eight centuries later, and yet Isaac's characterization of Bernard's love as terrifying (*amore terribilis*) and his terror as love-inspiring (*terrore amabilis*) reflect what Otto writes about the divine: it is experienced as a "*mysterium tremendum et fascinans*: a mystery both terrifying and attractive."

In fact, Bernard's influence on his audience was irresistible because in listening to him they felt the presence of God that strikes terror in our sinful hearts yet makes us yearn for purification and intimacy. No wonder that Bernard was able to found 167 monasteries from Clairvaux in fifty years, some of them filled with more than six hundred monks. No surprise, then, that he was able to chastise the emperor Lothair publicly in front of his court when the emperor demanded unfair concessions in exchange for his help to fight the antipope.

Bernard, however, was more than a charismatic teacher. He was perceived both as a demanding father whose inner strength inspires awe and a loving mother who nurses his children with the pure milk of spiritual doctrine (*Csi Preface*).

He displayed a terrifying severity when encountering what he thought was ill will, a perverse spirit opposed to God. Nor could anyone else pour out pain and sorrow with such an unrestrained vigor as Bernard did to his friends. Nevertheless, his contemporaries emphasized his joyfulness, *inconditas*. Whenever he spoke about God, he communicated to his listeners some of the joy and delight that overflowed from the abundance of his heart. Even during angry or painful outbursts, those close to him sensed that there remained in his heart an inner space of serenity and peace.

2. The School of Christ

Another reason for Bernard's success was the way he presented and lived Cistercian life. Though he did not deny the hardships, "our order is abjection, humility and voluntary poverty," he also added that it is "peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (*Ep* 142,1).

Cistercian life, however, is not Bernard's own personal school, but, is, in fact, the very school of Christ, the *rita apostolica*, the life of the apostles.

Whoever enters Clairvaux enters the community of the apostles, a fact which should leave the postulant feeling reassured: "Happy are you who abandoned yourselves and all that is yours without the slightest exception...I tell you in truth that you are in the truth, on the right way, on a holy way which leads to the holy of holies" (*Dir* 22,1-2). It is true that we must take upon ourselves the sweet yoke and the light burden of Christ. Yet, it is this burden itself that is carrying us rather than we ourselves carrying the burden: the many feathers lift up the bird rather than weigh it down. "Pluck out the feathers and its body will, by its own weight, plunge into the depth." It is the love of Christ alone that can teach us, the love which shares in Christ's own love that makes the soul fly and not feel the burden (*Ep* 385,3).

a) The School of Humility

Bernard's role in Christ's school is to proclaim and expound our Lord's word to those who listen to him. But his preaching of the word would be fruitless unless the Lord himself speaks in the heart of the listener. When Bernard preaches to those who are apparently lost in a life of sin, the Lord adds to the speaker's voice His inner voice of power: this alone can shake the desert of the soul and wake up the spirit from a state of torpor. God's inner voice, however, speaks all the time; it never stops knocking at the door of everyone. We need to work hard not in order to hear His word but in order to keep from plugging our ears when we hear it (*Conv* 1-3).

The Word of God is not only power but also light: it brings the sinner who is trying to escape from himself back to his heart and makes him face himself. It enlightens his conscience so that he may not only see but also feel the hidden filth that his evil acts have accumulated in his memory.

For this reason Bernard's school is a "school of humility" with Jesus



St. Bernard of Clairvaux.
Fr. Damian Szödényi, 1982.

as the teacher. Humility is the most important lesson every disciple must learn: without virginity we still can be saved, but without humility we would be lost (*1 Miss* 5, *3 Sent* 126,2). Humility is, however, not self-loathing, not servilism, nor a denial of God's gifts to me; it is, rather, accepting myself in the truth and accepting the truth in my relationship with my neighbors and God. Accepting myself in the truth means owning up to my sinfulness. As a result, I become very small in my own eyes and, unlike the Pharisee, do not place myself above anyone else. The acceptance of my own misery opens me up to the acceptance of my fellow human beings in the truth: I cannot set myself apart from them or above them. I must accept that I am one of them, a fellow sinner.

A brother's misery is more truly felt by a miserable heart. But in order to have a miserable heart because of someone else's misery, I must first recognize my own so that I may find my neighbor's mind in my own and know from myself how to help him (*Hum* 2-6).

No true compassion and therefore no true love of neighbor are possible without accepting the reality of our own misery. Only then can we extend our own feelings into his and feel his joys or troubles as our own.

Once we face our own reality, we will also develop the right attitude of humility towards God:

There is no place for grace to enter if [an awareness of] merit has already occupied the soul. A full acknowledgement of grace then indicates the fullness of grace in the soul. Indeed, to the extent that the soul possesses anything of its own, grace must yield to that possession. Whatever you impute to merit will be missing from [your] grace. I want nothing to do with the sort of merit which excludes grace. I dread whatever is mine so that I may become mine, unless perhaps what makes me mine is more mine [than myself]. Grace restores me to myself, freely justified (Rom 8:21), and thus sets me free from the bondage of sin. For where the Spirit is, there is freedom. (2 Cor 3:17: 67 SC 10)

Mary, then, is full of grace because she fully acknowledges that everything good in her derives from grace. We are all called to imitate her. Instead of bragging and thereby stealing at least a little glory (*gloriola*) for ourselves, we should acknowledge all our progress, all our goodness to be God's gift (84 SC 2). Then, because God works in us, joy and peace will be ours, yet we will attribute all glory to God. As a result, the right order of "the circulation of grace" will be restored: all graces poured from on high into us will be returned in thanksgiving to their source so that they may again be showered upon us (4 *Ded* 4).

Paradoxically, only when I renounce being my own, will I become, by God's grace, truly my own; only then will I truly possess myself in freedom, directing myself freely, out of the core of my being, towards what is truly good (67 SC 10). Thus, for Bernard, humility in this radical sense is the way to freedom, the way to the realization of one's authentic spiritual being as God's image and likeness.

b) Our Worth in God's Eyes

We have seen how the acceptance of our creaturely condition, our sinfulness and the misery resulting from it, have led to compassion for our fellow human beings and to the right attitude towards God, a condition of recognizing our true greatness as God's image and likeness. But being created in God's image and likeness is only the foundation for our value. Our actual worth derives from God's love for us.

If we see ourselves in our own heart, we are indeed miserable, or worse than that, we are nothing, but in God's heart we are his treasure (5 *Ded* 3-8). The Son of God values us more than his own blood since he has poured it out for each one of us (3 *Adv* 6). He loves his body the Church more than his physical body, since he gave up the latter for the former.

In God's plan we are all meant to become the spouse of His Son or, rather, all of us are to become that one Spouse of the risen Christ who is the Church (12 *SC* 11; 8 *SC* 8). The connubial image expresses our attitude to Christ as a complete surrender of our whole selves in trust and love. The goal of God's plan is to attain the perfection of this one Spouse the Church (and each individual spouse who actualizes the spousal character of the Church in herself):

The Father has predestined [this Bride] before all ages and prepared for his beloved Son. She is to be an everlasting delight for him throughout eternity so that she may become holy and immaculate in his sight, growing like a lily and flourishing forever before the Lord, the Father of my Lord Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom of the Church. (78 *SC* 8)

By sharing in God's love, the Spouse is, as it were, raised to a level of mutuality with God:

Is it true that the highest of all has become one of us all? Who has brought this about? Love itself, unaware of its own dignity, rich in mercy, powerful in affection, effective in persuasion. What could be more violent? Love triumphs even over God...He has emptied himself so that you might know that out of love fullness has been poured out, highness made equal to us, and his unique dignity associated with us. (64 *SC* 10)

The Bride's love flowing from the same source as that of the Groom is so pure that it seeks nothing but love, nothing but the person of the Groom. In this state even majesty yields to love. Yes, my brothers, love neither looks up nor looks down on anyone. It regards as equal all who love one another perfectly and joins together in itself the lofty and the lowly. In fact, it makes them not only equal but one. You may have thought up to now that God should be an exception to this law of love. However, he who clings to the Lord becomes one spirit with him (1 *Cor* 6,7; 59 *SC* 2).

Not only does love create a certain equality between the Bride and the Groom (presupposing rather than abolishing the essential difference between divine and human natures), it also provides a mutual delight for both of them:

When God loves, he wants nothing else but to be loved. For he has no other purpose in loving than to be loved in return, knowing that this very love makes happy those who love him. (83 SC 4)

St. Bernard goes as far as to declare (and he has no choice if he applies the wedding song of Psalm 44 to the relationship between the Word and his Spouse) that God desires the beauty of his spouse. The soul's beauty comes from her restored similarity with the Word. Just as the Word is the shining splendor and form of God's substance (*splendor et figura substantiae Dei*) insofar as he is Truth and Wisdom, the soul becomes beautiful in her conscious conformity to the Word as Truth and Wisdom. "The Truth shines in the mind and the mind sees herself in the Truth." In this serene self-possession of a purified conscience there is perfect humility since the soul does not claim anything for herself, but attributes all her wisdom and beauty to God. Thus, God truly desires this shining light, and according to Bernard, there is nothing brighter than this light of the soul's humble self-awareness.

The splendor of the soul illumined by Wisdom appears even in her body, shows in her gestures, in her stride and speech:

After the bright light of beauty has abundantly filled the depths of the heart, it must pour outward, as a light under the bushel basket, or rather as a light shining in the darkness which cannot remain hidden. The body, the image of the soul, takes up this light which shines and breaks forth, as it were, with its rays. The body diffuses the light all over its members and senses so that everything may radiate it: all activity, speech, look, walk, and laughter — if what is mixed with seriousness and decency could still be called a laughter. (85 SC 11)

The fullness of this state is reserved for life beyond the grave, yet Bernard knows that in God's plan we can already anticipate it here on earth.

c) *The School of Magnanimity*

This development from the condition of sinner to that of bride, from misery to beauty, does not take place without the utmost efforts of the soul freely cooperating with God's grace. Consequently, the humble soul must also be magnanimous. *Magnanimitas* in Bernard's works does not mean generosity or the readiness to endure and forgive. It is unconditional trust in God's promises; it magnifies and emboldens the soul to strive for great things. Its opposite is not *humilitas* but *pusillanimitas*, a condition of having little faith. In fact, true humility and magnanimity belong together, and the latter results

from the former. We see the connection and the perfection of both in Mary:

In her own judgement she was so humble; nevertheless, in her trust in the promise so magnanimous, that she who had regarded herself as a handmaid of little worth, did not at all doubt her election for this incomprehensible mystery, for this marvelous exchange and inscrutable sacrament and believed that she would soon become the true mother of the Godman. (*O Aspt* 13)

True humility, then, does not make us men of little faith, nor does magnanimity lead us to arrogance. On the contrary, the less we presume to accomplish by ourselves, the more we are enabled to trust to do great things by God's power (*Ibid.*).

Thus trusting faith alone makes us magnanimous. If one presumes to act without faith, it does not derive from a solid greatness of soul. Such a person is like a balloon filled with hot air, suffering from the tumor of an inflated ego (*5 Asc* 2).

The greater our trust, the greater our achievements. The promise of God to the Israelites exploring the promised land applies also to us: "Every place your foot (of faith) will tread shall be yours (*Deut* 11:24)." Both Moses and David, who wanted to see God's face, as well as the apostle Philip, who wanted to see the Father, and Thomas, who wanted to touch the side wound of Christ, all were granted their hearts' desire. Magnanimous souls, no matter how enslaved and overburdened by sin they are, may and, in fact, should aspire to become the spouse and thereby achieve a union of becoming "one spirit" with God (*32 SC* 9; *83 SC* 1-2).

At this point the role of Bernard as teacher and the role of all human teachers end: in the school of Christ human teaching can lead only to the threshold of love: no human master can teach us the love of God. Only God can teach the soul the love of God, and he does it by pouring into the soul his own love so that the soul may love with the very love of God (*83 SC* 2-6; *Div* 121).

Since Christ bought my whole self back from the slavery of sin by his whole self, I owe him all I have, my will and my body. By giving up my own selfish will (*voluntas propria*), I unite my will to his and thereby am in union with all my brothers (*Div* 22:6). If my body consumes itself in this offering of my will to God in the service of my brothers, my body itself will share in the glory of the soul at the second coming of Christ. Encouraging the body to serve the soul with patient endurance during this life, Bernard addresses it with an almost tender affection:

O, if you could only taste this sweetness and appreciate this glory! For I am going to talk about some marvelous realities which are nonetheless true and were never doubted by believers: the Lord of hosts himself, the Lord of power and the king of glory, will come down in order to give a new shape to our bodies and conform them to his own body of glory. How great will that glory be, what an unspeakable joy,

when the Creator of the universe who had come beforehand humble and incognito in order to justify our souls, for your glorification, O wretched flesh, will come in a solemn and manifest way, not in weakness, but in glory and majesty. (7 Adv 5)

I conclude this essay by disclaiming completeness. As an introduction to St. Bernard's school of spiritual life, it was meant to serve as a sort of hors d'oeuvre, the main purpose of which is to invite the reader to presently seek a full meal. How could we refuse listening to a teacher who in his own person and by his teaching leads us to Christ himself? If we are bold enough to engage on the journey along the path toward realistic self-knowledge, we will become united with our brothers and sisters in solidarity and compassion. Humility does not lead to the destruction of the person, but to the greatest boldness which dares to ask for the highest gift, God himself (*magnanimitas*). If we are ready to give up a narrow individualism, we will share in the mystery of the one perfect Bride, the Church, who is made by sheer grace, as it were, God's equal in the embrace of spousal love. If we surrender to God all that we have, our selfish will and our bodies, we will be truly free in a genuine self-possession; moreover, at the final coming of Christ, our bodies that we had consumed in his service will be returned to us shining with the splendor of Christ's own glorified body.



The Face of Christ.
Fr. Damian Szödenyi, 1980.

¹ The discovery of Bernard's relevance for spiritual life was preceded by a series of studies which showed, in the words of Gilson, that he is a "theologian whose speculative vigor and power of synthesis puts him among the greatest." Milestones in the discovery of Bernard's theology were the following publications and events: E. Gilson, *The Mystical Theology of St. Bernard*, first published in French (1937,1947) then in English (1940, 1990), the conferences of the convention in Dijon in 1953, commemorating the 800th anniversary of his death (*Saint Bernard Théologien: Analecta Ord. Cist. 9* [1953]), and the critical edition of his works from 1957 to 1977 (see footnote #2). Bernard's attractiveness growing beyond the circle of professional theologians is evidenced by a continuing series of the English translation of his works by Cistercian Studies Publications (W.M.U. Station, Kalamazoo, Michigan) and the yearly lecture series of the Institute of Cistercian Studies in Kalamazoo. The most important works published by Cistercian Studies Publications are CF 1, 13,19 *Treatises I, II, III*; CF 1A *Apologia*; CF 1B *On Precept and Dispensation*; CF 4, 7, 31, 40 *On the Song of Songs*; CF 10 *The Life and Death of St. Malachy*; CF 13A *Steps of Humility and Pride*; CF 13B *On Loving God*; CF 19A *On Grace and Free Choice*; CF 19B *In Praise of the New Knighthood*; CF 25 *Sermons on Conversion*; CF 37 *Five Books on Consideration*; CF 53 *Sermons for the Summer Season*. The excellent translation of his letters is out of print: *The Letters of St. Bernard of Clairvaux*, transl. B. S. James (Chicago: Regnery, 1953). For a more detailed discussion of the history of research on St. Bernard, see D. Farkasfalvy, "Bernard the Theologian: Forty Years of Research" *Communio* 17 (1990), 580-594.

² I use here the abbreviations for Bernard's works as established by the critical edition: *Sancti Bernardi Opera* vol. I-VIII. Ed. J. Leclercq, C.H. Talbot & H.M. Rochais (*Editiones Cistercienses*, Rome: 1957-1977). Here follow the Latin titles of the works used in this article: *Adv*: *Sermones in Adventu Domini*; *Asc*: *Sermones in Ascensione Domini*; *Conv*: *Sermo de conversione ad clericos*; *Csi*: *De consideratione*; *Ded*: *Sermones in dedicatione Ecclesiae*; *Div*: *Sermones de diversis*; *Ep*: *Epistola*; *Gra*: *De gratia et libero arbitrio*; *Hum*: *De gradibus humilitatis*; *Miss*: *Homiliae super Missus est*; *Nat*: *Sermo de Nativitate Domini*; *O Asspt*: *Dominica infra Octavam Assumptionis*; *SC*: *Sermones super Cantica Cantorum*; *Sent*: *Sententiae*.

³ See the references in the sermons of Gaufridus of Auxerre: "Loquebatur... Bernardus... incunda quadam devotione." *Quam incunde olim beatus nobis Bernardus dicere consueverat verbum illud.*" (quoted by J. Leclercq, "Sur la genèse des sermons de saint Bernard" *Études sur saint Bernard et ses écrits. Analecta S. Ord. Cist. 9* (1953), 68, 69, 80.

⁴ *Ergo plena confessio gratiae, ipsius gratiae plenitudinem signat in anima confitentis.*

⁵ *Horreo quidquid de meo est, ut sim meus, nisi quod illud magis forsitan meum est, quod me meum facit.*

⁶ To be my own in this first sense means acting as my own god, desiring my own will (*voluntas propria*) to supersede the will of God.

⁷ According to Bernard only God is in the full sense *sui iuris*, that is, possessing himself with an absolute freedom. But human beings share in this divine dignity by the fact that, in some way, they also possess themselves freely (the human will is also *sui iuris* or *liber sui*). Whatever they intend to do derives not from an external necessity but from their own will (*Gra* 3, 36).

⁸ The spousal character of the Church's relationship to Christ is firmly rooted in Scripture (Mt 9:15 & par.; Jn 3,29; 2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:25-27; Rev 18: 23) and coexists with the awareness that God and the glorified Christ, the Bridegroom of the Church, transcend sexuality. The risen Christ's relationship to the Church is the perfect, transcendent spousal relationship of which earthly spousal relationships are only a pale reflection, just as the fatherhood of God is the only perfect fatherhood in which our earthly fatherhood merely participates.

⁹ "*veritas in mente fulget, et mens in veritate se videt*" (85 SC 10). See also 3 *Asc* 3-5; 6 *Asc* 12; 6 *Asc* 14-15.

¹⁰ The last three paragraphs are selectively quoted from my "Bride and Mother in the *Super Cantica* of St. Bernard: An ecclesiology for our time?" *Communio* 20 (1993) 428-429 and from "The Significance of St. Bernard's Thought for Contemporary Theology" *Ibid.* 18 (1991), 577-578.

¹¹ Of course, the soul's free cooperation with grace is also the gift of grace (*Gra* 44-47).

¹² As seen at the beginning of our essay, God's Word strikes the soul at the beginning of conversion as a powerful threat and painful enlightenment. Yet the condemning and painful character of God's word derives from our sinful state rather than directly from God himself. God in himself is pure love. His mercy originates from his own nature, his condemning judgement results from the rebellion of our own free will (*Conv* 3, *Gra* 42, 5 *Nat* 3).

¹³ For a fuller treatment of St. Bernard's spiritual doctrine, see *La dottrina della vita spirituale nelle opere di san Bernardo di Clairvaux. Atti del Convegno Internazionale Roma 11-15 settembre 1990* (Rome, Edizioni Cistercensi, 1991). Many of the articles in this volume are written in English.

'A Cistercian Church in Dallas

Dr. Thomas Pruitt

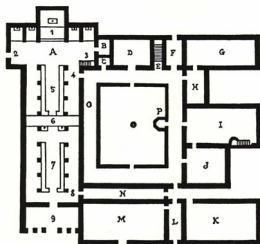


The Cistercian Abbey Church, viewed from the west.

Our Lady of Dallas Abbey Church is a genuine but contemporary example of Cistercian architecture, reflecting the Order's traditional commitment to simplicity, poverty, and seclusion as well as its willingness to formulate its message for the modern world. It uses a medieval design and both traditional and modern materials to meet the contemporary needs of abbey, school, and community.

The church takes its place as part of the larger complex of the Cistercian abbey, following the same design of the earliest times. According to the ground plan of the ideal Cistercian monastery, the monastic buildings were laid out around a central cloister which connected the vital parts of the buildings with one another. The monastic church was located on the north end of the cloister. The monks' dormitories were located at the east transept arm of the church while those of the *conversi*, or lay brothers, were on the west end. On the south side of the cloister, opposite the church, were other

¹ The following article is largely a condensation of the Senior Thesis in Art History of Pauline Hugger, a student at the University of Dallas, 1993. The revisions consist of a reorganization of the parts of the thesis as well as the addition of an introduction and conclusion designed to place the perceptive insights provided by Ms. Hugger in a context appropriate to this volume.



PLAN OF A CISTERCIAN ABBEY

- | | |
|------------------------------|--|
| A. Church | E. Stairway to the Dorter of Monks |
| 1. Presbytery | F. Parlor |
| 2. Door to the Cemetery | G. Community Room (<i>Scriptorium</i>) |
| 3. Stairway to the Dorter | H. Warming-House |
| 4. Door of the Monks | I. Refectory |
| 5. Choir of the Monks | J. Kitchen |
| 6. Rood-Screen | K. Refectory of the Lay Brothers |
| 7. Choir of the Lay Brothers | L. Passage |
| 8. Door of the Lay Brothers | M. Storage Room |
| 9. Vestibule | N. Corridor of the Lay Brothers |
| B. Sacristy | O. Cloister Gallery |
| C. <i>Armarium</i> (Library) | P. Washing Fountain |
| D. Chapter-House | |

The traditional plan of a Cistercian monastery.

buildings like the commons (*calefactorium*), dining hall (*refectorium*), kitchen and parlors.

The monastic church itself had a cruciform shape, a simple rectilinear basilica with a transept which was lined with various small, square chapels. Simple columnar supports in the nave acted as a screen to form two rectangular choirs, one for the monks and one for the *conversi*. The interior of the church remained unadorned. In the Cistercian tradition, there were no stained glass windows, no figurative carvings or murals, no pictures on the altars, and no decorative pavements. This ascetic simplicity marks Cistercian architecture, in terms of art history, as a "transitional" or "proto-Gothic" style, falling between late Romanesque and early Gothic.

In its simple construction and its austere appearance, Our Lady of Dallas Abbey Church is a contemporary example of this transitional architecture. It is situated on the north side of the abbey and completes the cloister. Because it is built on a hill, its façade, facing southwest, is clearly visible from Highway 114. The monastic church rises 40 feet high and covers an area of approximately 5800 square feet. It is constructed of 427 huge blocks of Texas limestone, each weighing approximately 4000-5000 pounds. The stone blocks, held in place by thick mortar and the compression of their own weight, recall the weighty appearance of many medieval structures, but make an even bolder and more primitive impact in their modern surroundings.

On the main façade, the exposed south wall, the courses of stone rise in an alternating light and dark pattern, and terminate in a broken pitched gable, a characteristic of church facades in the Early Christian tradition. In coloration, this façade resembles that of Bélápátfalva, a thirteenth century Cistercian monastic church still standing in northeastern Hungary. Three rectangular, vertical incisions in the upper zone of the façade are filled with cast glass to form a window triplet with the middle window placed higher than the others in order to follow the peak of the stone gable. The façade is topped by a Latin cross made of steel. The continuity of the south wall is interrupted by a post and lintel awning made of four limestone, cylindrical piers reinforced by steel. Beneath the awning, oversized wooden doors without handles "float" inside another four limestone, cylindrical piers. The porch floor is paved with flat, harder stones set in place with cement. Neither the color nor the texture of the stone has been altered; instead, the natural, irregular patterns and contours maintain the character of the stone and reveal the



The interior of the Cistercian Abbey Church.

quarry process. The hardness of the stones' surface creates splendid acoustics for singing and chanting. A sophisticated sound system has been installed for preaching, and an organ at the back provides opportunity for musical accompaniment.

Covered cement walkways lead to entrances on the west and east sides. A narrow cement walkway from the prep school leads to the west side of the abbey church where the students enter through a glass vestibule. On the facing wall of the vestibule area, a marble slab, formerly the top of the altar in the monks' old chapel, is now the backdrop for a dedicatory plaque commemorating the major donors to the chapel. At the right, a door leads to the west side aisle of the church. On the east side, visitors enter a large square foyer encased in glass. To the left is a large wooden door which leads to the church. The foyer connects the church to the first floor of the abbey.

The inside of the abbey church consists of a simple nave without a transept. The nave, measuring 40' x 120' x 40', with a rectilinear, longitudinal frame and laid in unsurfaced concrete, is a classic Roman basilica form set in timeless material in a contemporary manner. The floor is cement, the walls are made of stone, and the ceiling is laminated wood covered with an exterior copper shield. At first sight, it seems that the pointed roof is not directly attached to, but hovers between, the box-like walls. While the appearance of the ceiling is reminiscent of the Early Christian timber-truss roof, the actual support system is steel. A length of twelve-inch-wide glass panels interrupts direct contact between the wood ceiling and the lateral stone walls. The one-inch-thick glass pieces were poured by hand, and their individual swirls and indentions each diffuse the light differently. The position and integrity of the glass allows light to flood the space below and dance off the irregular stone surfaces. Light comes into the building not only by way of the "floating" roof construction, but also through the eight vertical, rectangular windows above the side aisles, through the triplet windows on the north and south walls, and by means of artificial lighting.

Situated on the north end, the sanctuary is the culmination of the interior both in form and function. This square space where the stone meets the floor is raised and demarcated by two steps. The altar, made of a slab of limestone proportioned according to the Golden Mean, is centrally positioned. Facing each other on either side of the altar are the monks' choir stalls. Directly behind the altar on the north wall is a protruding, shelf-like stone, above which is an emblematic, rectangular plaque that serves as the door to the Tabernacle. Above the carved metal plate are four pieces of sculpture mounted on the wall: a statue of the Virgin Mary, a Dove (representing the Holy Spirit), a figure of Christ crucified, and a statuette of a man's face, His hands outstretched (representing God the Father). In the four corners of the sanctuary on each wall, just above eye level, four small crosses (one for each wall) designate the holy space. They are the traditional marks of the church's consecration, an event which took place on May 12, 1992. A three-foot-wide doorway cut out of the stone on the east wall provides passage from the sanctuary to the monastery's east wing.

The abbey church embodies various styles of ecclesiastical architecture in an eclectic approach characteristic of post-modern architecture. The rectilinear, longitudinal form is ultimately derived from the Roman basilica;

the wooden roof suggests the Early Christian timber-truss system; blocky, thick stone walls are characteristic of the Middle Ages; the symbolic use of the number three is first seen in eleventh-century Ottonian churches; the sanctuary recalls the geometric perfection of the Renaissance masters; and the combination of man-made and natural materials as well as certain aspects of the simple decoration follows the tenets of Modernism.

The building serves as a chapel for the school and a monastic church for the Cistercian abbey. Its simple, basilican shape recalls the beginnings of the Cistercian Order in the eleventh century. According to the traditional orientation, the church is located to the northwest of the abbey, and the cloister is south of the church. Accessible from the cloister, the abbey church creates the proper atmosphere for concelebration and the frequent gathering of monks, with choir stalls facing each other on either side of the altar. In addition, decoration within the church is modest and its form kept simple. At the same time, however, its design provides for the inclusion of the laity, unlike in the early monastic churches, by providing no screen barrier between the monks' choir and the rest of the church but dedicating the whole nave to congregational seating. The effect is a feeling of familiarity, combining a spirit of antiquity with one of quiet reverence. The atmosphere is not the festive one found in many contemporary churches but one characterized by joyous solemnity.

Though the church's first intention is to function practically as a place of worship, it also conveys various messages through its architectural style and materials. A message of longevity is expressed in the use of durable



Bélapátfalva, Hungary, 13th century, a site visited by architect Gary Cunningham before designing the Cistercian church in Irving.

materials: stone, cement, and glass. The original, unconventional use of the stone proclaims a certain honesty — the stone is the wall; there is no false cover or veneer. The same could be said for the steel-reinforced concrete piers which openly provide support. In addition, the choir stall and pews are made of unstained, laminated Baltic birch plywood, an inexpensive yet durable material. The floor is poured of concrete, a humble material designed to last through use and time. Within this sacred space there are no false impressions, but a truth to nature — the nature of physics and the nature of the materials.

There is also within these walls the call to humility. The concrete posts and stone lintels form many controlled openings that act as thresholds which mark the transition from outside the church to within, from aisle to nave, from secular to sacred. The space of the doorway is uncomfortably narrow, so that the visitor might experience a kind of humble self-examination before entering the place where he will confront God. The hand-blown, glass skylights allow light from a lofty, unseen source, unlike the windows in a secular building through which light enters at eye level. The abundance of light from above enters the church to wash the textured wall surfaces. The effect is a general golden glow permeated by a random display of irregular shadows. With this dematerializing effect comes a sense of mystery and otherworldliness.

The Cistercian commitment to simplicity and austerity is evident as well in the sparing use of decoration on the inside of the church. The four statuettes on the northeast inside wall are Hungarian artifacts. The Marian statue above the tabernacle dates from 1902 and is carved from ash wood by Gyorgy Kiss, a recognized sculptor of the turn of the century. The three pieces symbolizing the Trinity are all 200-250 years old and are made of painted polychrome wood relief. They come from private donors. The door



Design for tabernacle door
Cistercian Abbey Chapel, Dallas, TX

© B. Hassell 1992.

The first drawing of the tabernacle's bronze door by Billy Hassell, class '74.

of the tabernacle, created by artist Billy Hassell, a Cistercian alumnus (Class '74), incorporates ancient Eucharistic symbols — pelican, cross, peacock, anchor, key — into its design.

Embodied in the abbey church is a sense of the past, the present, and the eternal. It represents the 900-year-old tradition of the Cistercian Order; it utilizes the talents of a contemporary architect and the latest advancements in technology. The use of natural stone represents a permanence that transcends the fluctuations of time. Its traditional design is not subject to the vicissitudes of fashion. The natural coloration and texture of the stone with the enhanced dematerializing effect of light give a spiritual quality to the place. The building seems very primitive, weighty, heavy, and solid, yet, an elevated light source produces an ethereal weightlessness which connects it with the supernatural world. The "floating" ceiling also gives a sense of otherworldliness and freedom.

Within that space, through his participation in the Liturgy of the Word and the Eucharist, the individual worshiper communicates, as have countless others in this long tradition, with another world, the divine world. And it is chiefly in its capacity to provide this mysterious commingling that Our Lady of Dallas Cistercian Abbey Church may be called a sacred place.

The Architecture of Cistercian

"My first involvement with the Cistercian building program was the Church. Jere Thompson, Jim Moroney and Peter Smith, the instigators of the Church project, contacted me and asked if I would like to be considered for the role of architect on the new Church. They thought it would be good if an alum would design the Church. I was honored, and after a few talks with Abbot Denis, we all agreed to work together on this project. The Abbot was careful to ensure that my mindset was in "sync" with the spirit of the project. I knew then that given the dedication of these alumni and the attitude of the Abbot, this was going to be an important journey. The process involved the entire monastic community and was a fruitful collaboration.

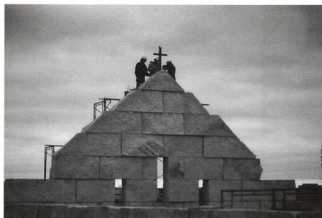
The Abbey Church is no doubt one of my most successful and rewarding projects. To be given the chance to come back to Cistercian almost twenty years after graduation and work with the monastic community and school alumni on the important and sacred place was amazing. This group, along with the team of builders, craftspeople, and many others, managed to understand the Cistercian heritage, the sacred purpose of the Church, and weave this spirit into the site in Irving, Texas.

My vision of the long-term look of the Cistercian Abbey and School is one of careful respect for the environment in which we exist and an honest understanding of the purpose of the Abbey and School. The purpose and mission do not allow for grand and expansive building or development. The focus has been to build only what is truly needed and to do so in a frugal and responsible manner. The approach is logical, particularly given the heritage of the Cistercian Order and this school.

I hope we can continue to keep the buildings simple and honest. I do want to see more focus on the environment, promotion of more native planting and involvement of the school's science programs to conduct long-term study of our eighty-acre habitat.

The library project is doing well. The same cohesive group from the Church project has joined hands with the school faculty, students and parents to plan a wonderful project. This project speaks to the Cistercian experience by further strengthening the connection between the school and Abbey. A fostering environment makes the Cistercian School what it is, a one-of-a-kind place. It may have taken me twenty years after graduation to realize this, but it's never too late."

*Gary Cunningham, Class of 1972
Informer interview, February 1996*



Erecting the cross on the façade of the abbey church by the architect, 1992.

"It would be nice to tell you that since entering the monastery and living under the Rule of St. Benedict, I have been able to completely abandon sin and all its false allurements and now to live my days in deepest serenity of meditation and asceticism. But, that's not how it worked for me. I continue to struggle and doubt and deny and "kick against the goad" as they say, but the major difference for me now is that I do this within a community and not alone. In other words, now I can identify my own struggles with those around me who have been there and done that and who are eager to offer advice, encouragement, or chastisement as the case may be. Also, I suppose I have become a bit spoiled to a certain extent with easy access to Christ as he is always present in the Chapel, with daily common prayer, with the real sense of brotherhood, etc. Also, I think my faith life has deepened a bit. I always prayed, but now I think I have a better sense of who I am and who God is, which seems to make prayer a richer experience. That's not to say it doesn't become difficult at times, but nonetheless richer."

*Fr. Paul McCormick, O. Cist.
Informer interview, January 1996*

Prison Memoirs

Abbot Wendelin Endrédy, O. Cist.

Abbot of Zirc (+1981)



*Abbot Wendelin after his election
in 1939.*

Introduction

Abbot Wendelin Endrédy was incarcerated from October 29, 1950, until November 1, 1956, at which point he was liberated by the Freedom Fighters of the short-lived Hungarian Revolution. After the defeat of the revolution he was returned to prison for a few months, but then his incarceration was changed to internment in the Benedictine Abbey of Pannonhalma, Hungary's only monastery not suppressed by the Communists. The tortures he had initially undergone and the six years of solitary confinement he suffered thereafter had seriously damaged his health. Yet, he lived for twenty three more years in relatively comfortable confinement. He was visited in the '70s not only by many of the monks of Dallas but also by a good number of Prep School students traveling with their Form Masters in Europe. He was never allowed to see his beloved monastery of Zirc again although it lay only thirty miles from his place of confinement. He died in 1981. Only then was he allowed to return home as the government finally allowed his burial in the abbatial church of Zirc.

His prison memoirs surfaced one year after the demise of Communism, having been deposited with his nephew mentioned at the end of the document. They were published in the summer of 1991 in Hungary in the

monthly magazine *Vigilia*. Originally written for Hungarian readers, the document needed some editing. I tried to keep the translation as faithful to the original as possible, but inserted footnotes and subtitles. It is a document of faith "shining in the darkness" and as such echoes well the passage read over and over in the Christmas season, the Prologue of St. John's Gospel: "The light shone in the darkness and the darkness was unable to overpower it."

Abbot Denis Farkasfalvy, O. Cist.

Forewarnings

As the Abbot of the Cistercian Abbey of Zirc in Hungary, at the end of November 1948, I made an official trip to Rome. My passport was issued only with difficulties, after repeated petitions and months of delay. Msgr. László Bánáss, the bishop of my diocese, and Mr. Joseph Cavallier, still a minister in the government, had to guarantee that I would return. While in Rome, I received a letter from Leopold Baranyai, a director of the European Bank in London. Quoting reliable English sources, he informed me of the following: Moscow had ordered the Hungarian government to arrest Cardinal Mindszenty during Christmas, then to imprison five other Catholic church leaders, of whom only I was known by name. Accordingly, I could count on being arrested as soon as I returned to Hungary. In Rome, the acting Secretary of State, Msgr. Tardini told me that he had received similar information from a different source. He asked me if I intended to return home. "Yes," I answered. Because the Holy Father¹ did not bring up the question at my audience, I assumed that he was in agreement with my decision. Since to both Msgr. László Bánáss and Mr. Joseph Cavallier I guaranteed that I would return, I went back home on time.

On my return, guards searched my belongings at the border and took away the personal letters entrusted to me in Italy. They were so well informed that they knew in which of my pockets I had which letter. I could, however, retain all documents given to me by the Vatican. I left all such letters and documents with Msgr. Kálmán Papp, the bishop of Győr. From there the bishop's chauffeur took me to Esztergom to give an account of my trip to Cardinal Mindszenty. He was already under house arrest: at the door of the Cardinal Archbishop's palace a policeman stood guard, yet he did not prevent me from entering. However, as I left the Cardinal's house, guards searched the car, including its trunk and the space under the seats. Did they think I was trying to organize the Cardinal's escape by hiding him in the car? To Cardinal Mindszenty I reported on my audiences in Rome and transmitted a message sent by the Pope. I gave him the Vatican's decree dispensing (in case of dispersion) the members of the religious orders from their vows of poverty and obedience. (in case of dispersion). Each person was given permission to acquire money and use his salary according to his best judgment, but with the obligation, of course, of helping the needy and elderly members. I kept the original copy which contained remarks and corrections in the Pope's own hand and sent a copy to the superior of each religious order.

About Leopold Baranyai's letter I spoke to Archbishop Joseph Grösz. My supposition was that he, as well as Bishop Shvoy of Székesfehérvár, Bishop Pétery of Vác, and the provincial of the Jesuits, Fr. Elmer Csávossy, were targeted for imprisonment. First, Archbishop Grösz memorized the

text of the letter verbatim; then Fr. Csávossy did the same. After our arrest, all three of us recited for the authorities the text of this letter word for word to prove that our imprisonment was part of a plot. The officials leading the interrogations began to scream at us, "How can you imagine that citizens in a sovereign country would be arrested at the order of a foreign power?" But possibly our action saved Bishop Shvoy from imprisonment and possibly also Bishop Pétery, for he was never formally arrested or imprisoned. They only interned him to the village of Hejce.

Before my arrest there were some other incidents. On July 14, 1950, they searched my rooms in Zirc, going through all my belongings. Three plainclothes policemen showed up. They did not bring a search warrant; they only showed their secret police identity cards. In my office, one sat at my desk and examined every document on the the desk with the most careful attention. During that time the other two examined each book on my shelves. They were especially interested in any new books with uncut pages and the bindings of any such books. In the middle of the table there was an envelope, still open, containing a letter which I was planning to send to Rome. I think they were looking for that letter, but as it often happens, they did not notice this item as it was placed in the most conspicuous location. They went through the upholstery of the furniture and threw all my clothes out of the closet. As I later found out, in my room of our residence in Budapest, they even stripped the wooden paneling off the walls, searching for hidden letters.

The letter on the table was a petition to the Holy See, asking that Fr. Richard Horváth, a Cistercian who had collaborated with the Communists,



*Cardinal Mindszenty
in Dallas, 1974.*

be removed from our Order. Before writing that petition, I asked him why he was not following my orders. He only answered: "I dare not tell you why." Fr. Richard was not a bad person. I am sure he was not the one who denounced me for writing the letter in question but someone to whom he had to report our conversation.

A week after this event the police searched the Accounting Office of the Abbey of Zirc as well as the files of the Business Office and sealed every room of both offices.

While I was in Rome, the housekeeper in charge of the monastery's kitchen, Miss Hedvig Sch—, was detained and brought to the main police station in Budapest. They interrogated her at length about the personal and financial conditions of the Abbey. They wanted to know all who were visiting me and what the relationship was between the members of the Order and our employees. She was also tortured. They put objects with a cutting edge between her fingers, pressing them together. In spite of all this she did not accuse us of anything.

At about the same time one of the finest craftsmen in Zirc was beaten half-dead at the police station. They forced him to sign a confession according to which I had solicited him to engage in espionage and that he had received a payment in American dollars. It was from that money, he was forced further to allege, that he had been able to build his new two-story house.

From these terrible events as well as from Mr. Baranyai's letter, I was able to anticipate what was awaiting me. Cardinal Mindszenty's arrest on December 26, 1948, had, however, generated a great deal of international outrage. Because of this reaction, the arrests of other church leaders, as well as my own, were delayed.

The Arrest

On Oct. 29, 1950, I was on my way from my nephew's home to Budapest. In the evening hours we had just reached the outskirts of the city; my secretary, Fr. Timothy Losonczy, was driving. All of a sudden an automobile cut in front of us, while another blocked us from behind. In each car four plainclothes secret policemen sat. Their leader approached me with the arrest paper. "Could I say good-by to my secretary?" I asked. "No, he is also coming with us," was the reply. As I was later told, Fr. Timothy endured his destiny very courageously. He was in prison for four years. He died before I could see him again.

They took me to the infamous secret police station at No. 60 Andrássy Street. The interrogation lasted eighteen hours with two short pauses. In the pauses they lit my face with high-powered lamps; two policemen saw to it that I would not close my eyes even for a minute.

The head of the Bureau of Investigation, whose name I never learned, told me that I had been under surveillance for two years and that they had followed every one of my steps. They had obtained irrefutable evidence about my criminal activities against the State. They told me that they intended to prove my crimes of organizing a conspiracy against the State, of espionage and of illegal dealings with foreign currency. They accused me of sending abroad twenty-four young members of the Order and of exhorting the



Head of Jesus.
Fr. Damian Szövényi, 1982.

Order to remain faithful to the Church even after Zirc had been suppressed. By doing this, they said, I wanted to weaken the power of the State and the new democratic regime. At the first interrogation they did not accuse me of conspiring to restore the Hapsburg monarchy, nor did they accuse me of antisemitism. These absurdities were invented later.

In the second hour of the interrogation, the colonel indignantly declared how insolent the hearsay was about the tortures done by the secret police. They would not even touch anybody. They had no intention of making a martyr of me. He gave his word "as a gentleman" to confirm all this. At this time, indeed, I could not even imagine that somebody of my age – I was 56 years old at the time – would be repeatedly beaten, kicked, tortured in all sorts of ways, and then given shots with chemicals that would deprive him of his free will.

They spent an awful lot of time telling me all sorts of slander about the personal lives of our bishops, the superiors of the religious orders and of other leading personalities of the Church. They declared that they knew who my lover was and made detailed statements about the sexual liaisons of the various bishops. That was followed by a long and detailed list of deviant sexual behavior attributed to these same persons.

They, in fact, did not want to turn me into a martyr. To the contrary,

they wanted to destroy my personality and turn me into a demoralized, humiliated non-person. They made no secret of their intent. I was told how they planned to make the press in Hungary and abroad become a participant in this Satanic comedy.

I received 72 hours to "think it over." After that, if I would not cooperate, they would publish all those "facts" of which they had accused me. They would destroy not only my image but also the image of the Cistercian Order and the Church as a whole.

"I need not one minute of reflection," I said. "There is nothing to think over."

At the end of my first interrogation they accompanied me to the basement. On an ice-cold pavement floor, they stripped me naked: they wanted to see if I was hiding any items. They tore off the lining of my jacket, they broke off the sole of my shoe, they took off its heel. They took away my shirt buttons, my suspenders, even my eyeglasses. In the prison cell there was only an incredibly dirty bunkbed. In the first two months I received no blanket. Later I got the kind of cover that one normally uses for horses. In the room the light was always on. Only the noise coming from the street enabled me to distinguish between night and day. I was expected to sit on the bunkbed without leaning back; only with permission was I allowed to lie down. I was expected to keep my hands outside the blanket. In my sleep I had to turn my head away from the wall, facing the light.

The Accusations

The two trips which I made abroad in 1948 were used against me as evidence for espionage and high treason. I was told that the real head of the Church was Wall Street, that the Pope was in its service. It seemed to be important for them to state that the religious orders were the blindest instruments of the Vatican and therefore each religious man or woman was under suspicion of being an agent. They did not say that all spies were Jesuits but that all Jesuits were spies. They gave me a long list of Hungarian priests living abroad and wanted information about them.

I was told repeatedly that according to Moscow I was an especially dangerous agent of espionage. They knew that through the cultural attaché of the Italian Embassy I corresponded with Fr. Blaise Füz, a Hungarian Cistercian living in Rome. I suspected, indeed, that my activities were closely followed. Just six months before my arrest, I learned that in Vienna, Austria, a Russian soldier approached Béla Lehrmeyer, a former employee of the Archdiocese of Kalocsa offering him, for 500 dollars, one of my letters that had been confiscated from a diplomatic messenger. This was a letter which I had, indeed, written shortly before the incident and had sent to Fr. Blaise, through the Italian Embassy of Hungary.² I was therefore aware that the secret police knew, at least partially, of the letters which I had sent abroad through diplomatic channels. During the ensuing interrogations I was time and again struck by the evidence that even my most confidential letters and the replies received for them were known to the secret police. But what did these really contain? I wrote about the life of our Order in Hungary, our work and our difficulties, the confiscation of our monasteries and institu-

tions, the deportation and internment of the monks as well as the various roadblocks set up by the government impeding our pastoral and educational activities. From 1950 I informed the authorities in Rome also about what was happening to other religious orders. After July of 1950, as the suppression of religious life began and our monks were deported from the monasteries, I informed the Vatican authorities about the meetings and conferences which state officials began with certain members of the episcopacy.

One of my "crimes" was the fact that after the war, through Fr. Julius Hagyo-Kovács, O. Cist., I had notified the American Mission in Budapest about the list of items (industrial and agricultural goods and machinery, means of transportation and other valuables) which were forcibly taken from our possession by the Soviet Army. I tried to explain that with this move I intended to lessen the amount of restitution Hungary was supposed to pay the Allied Forces. My interrogator simply replied that I was acting out of hatred for the Soviet Union.

My contacts with the officials of the British and American embassies were termed acts of espionage. In vain did I argue that I was in possession of no military or industrial secrets and consequently could not have informed them about such matters. I had no inkling that my letters sent abroad, informing our friends and the superiors of our Order about the Abbey, our schools, the enrollment of our schools, or the social break-down of our student body could be regarded as a "crimes of espionage." Even my interrogators must have felt that these accusations were, in fact, bordering on the ridiculous. For later, when preparing me for my trial, they gave strict orders that if I would be asked about any of these "crimes," in my replies I must avoid such matters. "If that jack-ass judge would ask you such stupid questions, you must do a snow job," I was told.

They interrogated me at great length about the "Americana," the Catholic Youth Organization for University students, founded and run by Cistercians. They accused me of trying to restore Hapsburg rule in Hungary, of supporting Admiral Horthy and of antisemitism. What was their proof? They claimed that two Jewish boys were beaten up by university students. But what did I have to do with all these matters?

One of the main points brought up against me was my "political activity." As they formulated it, I had actively participated in Cardinal Mindszenty's efforts to overturn the regime by counterrevolution.

In fact, my anticipations about the future were quite different. For about one year before my arrest, István Friedrich, a former prime minister of Hungary, visited with me in Budapest. By then an elderly man, he asked my help in finding a housekeeper and a nurse for himself. In the course of our conversation he informed me that soon there would be radical political changes and Hungary would become part of the Western world. He said that the Western powers had contacted him to lead the future government. I told him in all honesty that I found his predictions impossible. Maybe in decades such changes could take place but in the given situation his political predictions appeared totally unrealistic. Yet the secret police insisted that I had participated in efforts to form a new government by instigating an uprising.

Another proof of my activities against the regime was the general attitude of the Cistercian monks who, joining the Jesuits, forcefully protested

against the suppression of the religious orders. In fact, in those years the Jesuits and the Cistercians became very close to each other because the members of each Order took a unified stand. They made a vigorous impression on the country, each clinging to its own particular spirituality. I was also accused for the way the community of Zirc helped the nuns who were deported there and crowded into our buildings in August of 1950.³ Indeed the monks in Zirc exhorted the nuns not to consider themselves "suppressed" but to keep their unity and loyalty to their Orders. The regime was surely disturbed by the unified stand taken by these different religious communities.

By the way, I was shocked to realize that the secret police were fully informed about every word that was spoken at the meetings of the religious superiors of the country. Their spy net was working.

It was also considered as one of my crimes that I visited in prison those of my monks who had been arrested before me: Frs. Julius H., Fr. Thomas F.,⁴ Fr. Gerard M., Fr. Clement P., and also some others outside the Order. My visits were considered a demonstration of sympathy for the enemies of the regime and an expression of hatred for socialism.

They wanted to obtain from me a confession that I had played a major role in organizing illegal student groups with the purpose of toppling the regime. It turned out later that the desire to obtain a confession of this kind was their main reason for applying tortures during my interrogations. The factual basis for this accusation was rather thin. A Cistercian alumnus, one of my former students named Ervin Papp, was involved in such anti-Communist activities. Before my arrest I learned about his plans and made an effort to dissuade him by explaining that, in our political situation, any such attempt would be doomed to failure and dangerous. I gave him this advice in a letter, asking him to destroy it upon reading. Unfortunately, he did not follow my request. At his arrest, my letter fell into the hands of the police. In spite of the letter's content arguing against any subversive activity, the letter was used as proof of my involvement in conspiracy.

Torture

My first torture took place in an elegant room. They stripped me naked. Then facing a young officer I was forced to begin deep knee bends. Every time I bent down, I was forced to kiss his boots. This went on till, exhausted, I collapsed. Meanwhile I was supposed to answer questions. After I had passed out a few times, I was brought to a cell in the basement. I spent two weeks in a little prison cell that looked like a burial cave of 2 by 1.3 meters (7' by 5'). Above the bunk bed there was a leaking sewage line, constantly dripping on me. I was not allowed to lie down. However, while sitting I was still able to catch some sleep. I got no blanket. It was November. I was constantly cold. In these terrible days I was constantly praying to God to make me die so that I would not hurt anyone by what I might say.

Two weeks later the interrogations continued. Behind a huge desk sat a colonel, probably the head of the Office of Investigation. They made me sit in front of him, while I was surrounded by five or six plainclothes policemen. To the side three people, two majors and a captain, sat on a leather couch. The interrogation focused exclusively on the conspiracy of the univer-

sity students. I told them again that I had participated in no such thing. (At that time I did not know as yet that, disregarding my advice, Ervin Papp had indeed started a subversive organization.) The detectives spat into my face. The colonel asked them, "Do you know any other way than torture to break a man's resistance?" They all said, "No." They then dragged me to the other room where I had been tortured the first time. The same three people were waiting for me: a huge, muscular major, a captain, and another man in civilian clothes.

They stripped me again and made me do exercises till I collapsed. Meanwhile with some flat object they dealt immense blows from behind on my shoulder. For three weeks after this I could not move my head. They also kept on kicking my lower back. The blows and kicks did not cause acute pain but time and again I was knocked unconscious. Yet I do not think I ever remained unconscious for any long period of time. I kept on concentrating on what to say and tried to answer all the questions which they were asking. For if I remained silent and did not deny any of their statements, they took my silence as an admission of guilt.



Man.
Fr. Damian Szödenyi, 1992.

I had to undergo a great variety of physical trials. They made me face the wall and forced me to lean onto a pencil-like object set between my forehead and the wall. They put nails and needles under my heels. They pushed against my side the heated plates of electric ranges. When I collapsed, they quickly pulled out the plank with the nails and needles and with a few kicks forced me to stand up again.

Another method was to make me squat time and again. They put into my hand weights of 20 to 30 pounds. I was supposed to squat with my heels over the nails until I collapsed. Then again with blows and kicks they brought me back to consciousness.

I was also tortured with electric shocks. They conducted electricity to my lips, around my eyes, my nose, my ears, and even to my penis.

The game of "Kiss the Cross" consisted in forcing me to kiss a metal cross and a metal plate, the latter being called the "gospel book." The electric circuit was closed every time I held the plate and kissed it. They said if I told the truth no harm would be done, but if I lied the electric shock would kill me. My lips were burned and a wound as big as a quarter was left on my mouth. As I collapsed, a sharp object lying on the floor seriously wounded my knee. This wound became infected and swelled up as large as my palm. They brought two doctors who dressed and bandaged the wound with the greatest care. When one of them asked, "What happened to you?" I softly answered, "It happened during the interrogation..." At that moment a policeman stepped out from behind a screen and harshly interrupted, "He fell down on the steps."

During the tortures there was a point beyond which I ceased to feel that I was being hit. At times the prison guard would tell me to wipe the blood from my face. I did not realize that I was bleeding.

Writing My "Confession"

After two sleepless weeks, when my knees were bruised and infected, they took me into a dirty little room. They called it the "writing room." Here the prisoners had to write their biographies and confessions, admitting all the charges. I was very tired, I just fell on a bed stained by blood and puss. A male nurse entered with a syringe in his hand. He said that the doctor sent him and I would get a shot more effective than any sleeping pill. He gave me two shots. In ten minutes I began to feel funny. In this altered state of mind, which I cannot describe, I was led to another hearing that lasted the whole night. These were the most painful hours of my life. I had to concentrate all my strength in order to keep my mind and will under control. Obviously, they injected into my system some mind-altering drug. But I was able to keep my mind in control. And yet, besides the horrors, up to this day I could not and cannot recall the details of that terrible night. I cannot recall what questions I was asked.

Six months later I was brought to confront Ervin Papp. As I realized that he was, indeed, organizing a conspiracy, I stated, "I was in no way part of this, but, in case, by accepting some part of his guilt, I could help Papp and his fellow-defendants, I am willing to cooperate." This remark was never included in the minutes of my process.

After eight months of such experiences, I was brought to court. Mr.

Vilmos Olti was the judge; the prosecutor was Julius Alapi.⁵ The whole procedure was utter comedy. I received detailed instructions about what to say in court. I was warned that if an attorney asks me a question which is not in the script, I was not supposed to reply. I was accused of high treason, espionage, conspiracy, and illegal handling of foreign currency. My sentence was made public June 28, 1951. I was sentenced to 14 years in prison.

Life in Prison

After sentencing, they put me into a car with screened windows. They drove around for more than two hours while I was sitting between two armed prison guards. I thought I was being transported to the city of Szeged, but as it turned out they carried me only to another prison in Budapest, about 10 minutes from the courthouse.

For almost three years I lived in this prison, the prison of Konti Street. I was in utter solitude, never meeting anyone. I was one of the so-called "secret prisoners." As I learned later, there were two other such prisoners there: Msgr. Grösz, the archbishop of Kalocsa,⁶ and the former Socialist leader, Árpád Szakasits.⁷ In this prison the guards made me suffer a great deal. Often they did not let me out to the restroom. For hours I was in extreme pain. My cell was filthy, my skin was infected in the dirty cell, three times my face was disfigured by such infections. They fed me with bread made of flour gone bad. But during the winter they heated rather well. Each pair of cells had a common stove.

The day after my arrest I petitioned that I be allowed to say mass. First at Christmas of 1950 then at Easter of 1951 I was given permission to celebrate mass. But only after May 3, 1951, Ascension Thursday, did I receive a chance to say mass daily. They brought to my cell a chalice broken at its handle (I had to fix it with a piece of string) and a Franciscan mass book. Through five and a half years I was able to celebrate mass each day. At Christmas and All Souls' Day I said three masses. At the beginning they tried to mock me while I was saying mass. But when they saw that I was not paying attention to them, they stopped. From the beginning of my imprisonment I asked for an opportunity to go to confession. I sent letters to the Ministry of Justice with this request but never received an answer. Otherwise I did everything to stay busy, to keep my mind occupied. Whatever had been beautiful in my life, I tried to recall over and over. In this way God's grace doubled in my soul and comforted me in my prison life.

On August 7, 1953, the feast of St. Cajetan, I had my first chance to go out for a walk. One round in the courtyard took 68 steps. I was allowed 12 rounds. Later, my walks were made longer. In the prison to which I was later transferred, I was allowed to walk twice a day. There I was able to stay in the sun, sometimes even to sit down. In 1954 or 1955, in the summer, I ventured to stop, admiring a little piece of weed. The guard jumped me in a rude voice: keep on walking!

For the first eight months of my imprisonment I received no books, no paper, and no pencil or pen. After my sentencing I received numbered sheets of paper, and the guards repeatedly checked to see what I was writing down. I was solving math problems and made notes of the books I was given to read. The prison library consisted mostly of Soviet authors. I read

Gorky, Ilya Ehrenburg, and others. The rest of the books were atheistic, hateful toward church and clergy and showing employers in the worst light. I asked for a Bible, the book *Canon Law for Religious Orders*, and a book on math or physics. The first two titles were immediately rejected, a book on math and physics was delivered into my hands five years later, on November 1, 1956, the day of my liberation by the Freedom Fighters. But two months after my trial I received the four volumes of the Breviary. And right after my sentencing, they gave me a rosary, though not my own.

Throughout the prison years I had to get up at 5:30 a.m. The routine consisted of washing, dressing, and cleaning of the cells. Breakfast was given at 8 a.m. In the first years for breakfast they gave us soup cooked with shortening and flower, and later they switched to the black coffee used by the military.⁸ They gave each day 300 grams of bread (2/3 of a pound), in three allotments. Lunch was given at noon; it consisted of soup (made of canned vegetables) and about half a liter of some cooked vegetables. Once a week 100 grams of boiled meat was offered; on Saturday and Sunday the dinner was cold cuts. At 9 p.m. we had to go to bed. But in the year of 1956 my food was identical with that of the prison personnel. In my first prison (Konti Street) I was given a numbered metal bowl and a spoon with the same number on it. The number was 201. When they moved me to another prison, the bowl and the spoon accompanied me so that I would not attempt sending any message of my whereabouts in the way customary among political prisoners.⁹

Right after my arrest there was no heating in the cells in which I stayed; only the hallways were kept warm and from there we received some heat. By the way, underground cells are usually not very cold, only extremely dirty and stinking. The Konti-Street prison was adequately warm. But in Vác, my next prison in which I spent almost two years, there was no heating whatsoever. It was there that each finger on both my hands, three toes on my right foot and two on the left as well as my left ear suffered frostbite.

I was otherwise never seriously sick, but I went through the usual prisoner illnesses. I struggled with infections of the digestive system, and because of a lack of vitamin C, my teeth became loose; many, in fact, broke



Abbot Wendelin, liberated for three months by the Freedom Fighters, 1956.

or fell out. I had problems with my sense of balance (inner ear), various deficiencies involving the heart, and sleeplessness. But my nerves did not give up, and I preserved my sense of humor. I was able to rejoice seeing a small bunch of weeds pushing their leaves up in the prison court. I put some of the leaves into my breviary; I still keep them.

When I was sick with those "prison illnesses," doctors of the secret police came to take care of me; their behavior and treatment were impeccable. To such secret prisoners as I, the regular prison doctors were not allowed.

The prison cells maintained by the secret police as well as the restrooms were horribly dirty. They did not clean them, nor did they give cleaning instruments for us to clean them. It was only in the prison on Konti Street that I got for the first time a separate towel, a piece of soap, a wash bowl. There I could treat the floor with oil and keep it cleaner. In the prison of Vác there were innumerable bedbugs in my cell. On the first three days after my arrival, May 13, 1954, I killed 750 of them. Later I got some DDT in powder and I was able to get rid of them all. In other prisons I found no bugs.

It was like a blessing to get from Vác to my last prison, the Central Prison in Budapest. It happened on Good Friday, March 30, 1956. They placed me in the same cell in which, as I later learned, Cardinal Mindszenty has spent quite some time. Although I was still isolated from everyone, life became much more bearable. I was given paper, pencil, and books to read.

About the attitude of my guards working for the secret police, I have already spoken. In the prison on Konti Street they at times turned on the lights 30 times during a single night so that the prisoner would not have a chance to sleep. It was most terrible to hear them blaspheme the name of God, the Lord Jesus, and the Virgin Mary in the context of incredible obscenities. Yet I met some more humane guards even at these worst of places.

I had a series of cellmates only during the first months of my imprisonment, while I was preparing for the trial. I thought, at first, that they were snitches working for the police. My first companion, who came in January of 1951, was a former general of the Army. When he greeted me with the words, "Please don't tell a thing about yourself," I decided that he could not be an agent. Later a captain of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, then another colonel of the Army, and finally an engineer were my companions. But for the next six years I was completely alone.

Throughout these years I had one single visit. Three months before being set free, my brother's son was allowed to see me. We were allowed to speak to each other for half an hour. It was from him that I learned that on January 16, my mother had died. It was at that time that I also learned about the death of a member of our Abbey, Fr. Justin Baranyai. It hurt me so much to learn that in the prison he had lost his mind and never recovered, even after he had been set free.

When I was freed, my original clothes in which I had been arrested could not be found. They found only my watch tied to shoe laces; they returned my abbatial ring and a clergy suit.

My life of six years in prison is an asset which I would not exchange for any earthly treasure. As a result of all of these experiences, my life was enriched immeasurably. I feel no anger against any person who tortured me.

On November 1, 1956, a guard opened my cell. Three men in civilian clothes entered with the greeting that sounded like a dream: "Praised be Jesus Christ! The Most Reverend Abbot of Zirc is free!"

It was about 6 p.m. as I exited from the Central Prison. I was the last prisoner to leave – the last one, because my name could not be found on any list of inmates.

¹ Pope Pius XII.

² At the time of Abbot Wendelin's arrest, the eastern portion of Austria was still under Soviet occupation, and Vienna was divided into four "sectors" (British, American, French, and Soviet). For the sake of obtaining Western currency, Russian soldiers stationed in Vienna – and thus freely cruising throughout the three "Western sectors" – often engaged in offering for sale documents which they had intercepted in the line of duty. Abbot Wendelin was notified before his arrest by the person he names in his memoirs that some of his letters had been indeed intercepted and put up for sale.

³ Before the complete suppression of the religious orders was forced upon the Hungarian church, the majority of the country's religious men and women were interned into the largest church facilities. In this way several hundred religious women from all over Hungary were transported to Zirc on trucks and left there with no provision for food and lodging. With many of them sick and elderly, the Cistercians living in the Abbey (about ninety persons, of whom almost sixty were in their twenties) were under extreme pressure to provide for these guests forced upon them. Every available room and most hallways were transformed into living quarters. While the town of Zirc was generously feeding the interned nuns, the priests of the community offered spiritual help to the dispossessed women living in the anxieties of an uncertain future.

⁴ Fr. Thomas Fehér was arrested in 1948 and was kept in jail. When he was released by a judge's order, but only temporarily, he managed to escape from Hungary. He eventually came to Texas and lived in the monastery of Irving until his death. He taught in the Cistercian Prep School 1963-1976.

⁵ Both Olti and Alapi played the corresponding roles in Cardinal Mindszenty's show trial. Alapi, a former Catholic lawyer of high reputation, committed suicide a few years later. Six years later, in 1956, Olti was still an active judge, but by then he was said to be an alcoholic, losing his skills for conducting showcase trials. As a law student I once saw him holding trial. Then also he was dealing with a political prisoner. He must have "messed up" on his script for he allowed the defendant to exclaim, "But how could I tell you about my interrogations by the police, since I lost consciousness under the beatings?" We, the law students in attendance, reacted in an uproar of indignation. He called us to order, but back at the university a big discussion followed about what we had witnessed. The revolution of 1956 – to break out in five months – was already in the making.

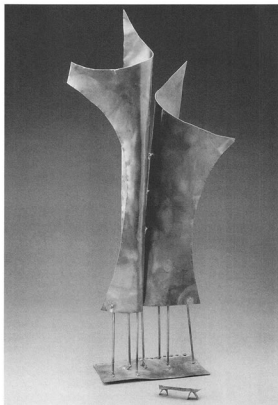
⁶ As the second-ranking prelate of the Catholic Church in Hungary, Msgr. Grösz, soon after the arrest of Cardinal Mindszenty, was forced to sign a

document in 1950 in which he recognized the suppression of the religious orders of the country. But soon after he was also arrested, tried, and sentenced. Set free in the 1960s, he died soon afterwards.

⁷ Árpád Szakasits had a role somewhat similar to that of Msgr. Grösz. As the leader of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party in 1949, he was forced to sign the "voluntary union" of the Social Democrats with the communists. After being President of the Republic for a short time, he was arrested, tried and sentenced for high treason. He was released in the '60s and died soon thereafter.

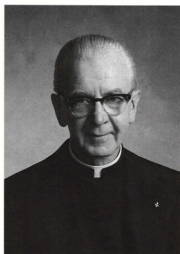
⁸ In military service, black coffee made of the cicoria plant. According to persistent rumor, known to all of us who served in the Hungarian People's Army, prisoners and draftees were given sedatives in the daily coffee. The bitterness of this coffee substitute could successfully hide the taste of any drug.

⁹ By marking their utensils prisoners sometimes succeeded in sending messages about their being alive. Abbot Wendelin's whereabouts were unknown to his community for years. His mother died without ever getting a chance to visit him or to learn where he was imprisoned.



Freedom.
Fr. Damian Szödegyi, 1973.

In Memoriam: Anselm Nagy (1915-1988)



Abbot Anselm Nagy, first abbot of Our Lady of Dallas.

The Right Rev. Abbot Anselm Nagy was born February 2, 1915, in Buják, a town in northern Hungary. His parents lived the poor and simple life of Hungary's rural population. His father was a construction worker, and later became a small building contractor. Of four children he was the third with one older brother and both an older and a younger sister. He was particularly close to his older sister and showed great respect for his brother József Nagy, a monsignor in the diocese of Vác and a very well-liked professor of theology.

Though in baptism he received the name Alexander, his nickname from family and childhood friends remained "Sanyi" throughout his life. After five years in a rural elementary school, he entered the Cistercian school in Eger, and later transferred to the Saint Emery School in Budapest, joining the Cistercian oblates in a program for candidates aspiring to the priesthood. After graduation he entered the novitiate of the Order in 1934. For several years he studied theology in Rome at the Pontifical University "Angelicum," completing his doctorate in 1942. His dissertation on the influential XII-century treatise of Pope Innocent III, *De Miseria Humanae Conditionis* (*On the Misery of the Human Condition*) was published in Latin and earned excellent reviews from church historians. Until a newer critical edition, based on broader manuscript evidence, was published in the eighties, the name Anselm Nagy often appeared in the footnotes of works on Innocent III. Fr. Anselm was

very proud of his theological education and recognized the Dominicans as his teachers. He kept a copy of the *Summa* of Thomas Aquinas in his room and tried to pattern his theological reasoning according to the scholastic model.

He was ordained a priest in 1941. During the following three years he served as assistant pastor in the rural parish of Előszállás and also worked there as an accountant for the fiscal administration of the monastery's estate. The director of the abbey's financial administration, Fr. Julius Hagyó-Kovács, selected him for this job because of his rigorous work-habits and methodical orderliness. While working with Fr. Julius, Fr. Anselm developed a deep admiration for him. Indeed, he was a "legendary economist," whose style of management was famous nation-wide. In the thirties Fr. Julius was considered for the position of minister of agriculture in Hungary, but, out of his devotion to his vocation as a monk, he refused to consider it. This person, who, after the fall of communism, had a monument erected in his honor in the village of Előszállás, made a great impact on Fr. Anselm. Between 1945 and 1950 they exchanged many letters until such time as Fr. Julius was imprisoned by the communists. When he was released in 1957, they resumed their correspondence. In 1964, broken by his suffering in prison, Fr. Julius died.

In 1945, as the Russian troops invaded Hungary, Fr. Anselm himself had a traumatic experience. He was once detained and kept under house arrest for several days, an experience to which he made repeated references throughout this life.

Following the war, in September of 1945, he was sent by his superiors to the West with a multiple mission, though its main component was to provide shelter for those Hungarian Cistercians whom the new Communist regime would force to flee from their homeland. He arrived in the United States in April 1946. He went first to the monastery of Spring Bank in Wisconsin, but soon afterwards, in order to learn English while at the same time being employed, he began serving as assistant pastor in the Hungarian church of St. Stephen's in Toledo, Ohio. He loved this first assignment as the way by which he learned about American life and American Catholics. His admiration for the pragmatic and efficient ways of American business and the ways funds were raised, administered and spent on development made a deep impression on his thinking and concept of management. In 1949 he returned to Spring Bank where he was made subprior and novice master. He was considered rigoristic and tough but his exquisite manners denoted deep down a kind and noble heart. While in Wisconsin, Fr. Anselm began studying at Marquette University in Milwaukee and eventually obtained a Master of Science degree in mathematics, his favorite topics being algebra and calculus. Adhering to a thorough method of preparation for exams, he usually worked every single problem in each textbook used in a course. While often slow and reticent to form verbal arguments or to use rhetoric for resolving theoretical issues, his arithmetic skills were superb and for his decisions he trusted "the numbers" more than the flowery arguments or lofty speculations of his brother priests.

On February 1, 1953, those who had decided to leave Spring Bank chose him as their superior, and thus it became primarily his task to lead the community in the direction of a new foundation. After an intensive search, at the invitation of Bishop Gorman in 1954, Fr. Anselm began the transfer of

his group to Dallas where the Cistercians played a decisive role at the foundation of the University of Dallas. In dealing with the problems of the foundation he showed the contrasting qualities of shy reticence on the one hand and courageous and calculated leadership on the other. Throughout the rest of his life, for example, he fought to obtain direct and inalienable rights to the acreage of the monastery. His lack of full success was a permanent source of frustration, yet he remained both cautious and grateful toward all authorities he had to deal with, including the Abbot General of the Cistercian Order who had been, for a while, less than enthusiastic concerning the establishment of the Dallas foundation.

Soon afterward, a new project of his monastery began to materialize: in 1962 the Cistercian Preparatory School opened its doors to its first fifty students. In the following year the monastery was raised by the Holy See to the rank of an abbey and the former prior, Fr. Anselm, was elected its first abbot. He served in this position until 1975. Subsequently, following provisions of the abbey's new constitutions, he was elected abbot for two consecutive terms of six years. Thus, he served as the abbot of the Cistercian monastery Our Lady of Dallas until April 4, Easter Monday, 1988.

Under his leadership the Cistercian community became a significant part of Catholic life in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, especially through its contribution to Catholic education. From 1956-1968 Fr. Anselm worked as professor of mathematics at the University of Dallas, and during the 1967-1968 school year as teacher of theology at the Cistercian Preparatory School. The Class of '71 still remembers his religion classes, characterized by broad conceptual outlines, a systematic presentation and fascinating anecdotes inserted into the material.

The construction both of the monastery's first buildings (1957-1964) and of those of the Cistercian Preparatory School (1964-1966) remain lasting witnesses of Abbot Anselm's careful planning, circumspect administrative skills, unrelenting work at fundraising, and prudent fiscal management.

At the end of his life he was most grateful for having succeeded in bringing together under one roof all the monks of Zirc, who were living in exile, providing for them a home and a continuation of the life to which they were called. Toward those who suffered from illness or personal difficulties he showed exceptional kindness and patience. The monks who were hospitalized he frequently visited. When his friend and novice mate, Fr. Louis, became paralyzed by a stroke, he visited him weekly and said mass for him in his room.

Soon after retiring from his abbatial duties, he succumbed to illness. Early in May of 1988, he was diagnosed with inoperable cancer. Chemotherapy caused more suffering than healing. On his deathbed he hardly ever complained. When asked if he were suffering, he always answered, "Physically not," a response which indicated the intense spiritual suffering he was experiencing. It was clear that while dying, he was preoccupied with the future of the monastery. The night before he died, his last visitor, Jesuit Father Pat Koch, succeeded in engaging him in a long and lucid conversation. He expressed his gratitude for the life he had received from God and for all the abundant blessings that had been bestowed upon the monastery. He died on August 5, 1988 at St. Paul's hospital at the age of 73, after two months of considerable suffering.



Community picture taken in the fall of 1976.

First Row: Ralph March, George Ferenczy, Damian Szödlényi, Leonard Barta, Benedict Monostori, Abbot Anselm Nagy, Pascal Kis-Hornáth, Thomas Feber, Lambert Simon, Placid Czigmazia, László Lékai **Second Row:** Emilian Novák, Bede Lackner, Aloysius Kimecz, Matthew Kovács, David Balás, Henry Marton, Julius Lekóczy, Christopher Rábay, Gilbert Hardy, Peter Verhaelen, Moses Nagy, Bernard Marton **Third Row:** Melchior Chladek, Rudolb Zimányi, Odo Egres, Mark Major, Ansel Mensáros, Robert Maguire, Gregory Schweers, Roch Kereszty, James Lehrberger, Denis Farkasfalvy, Balázs Szarka

Necrology of Our Lady of Dallas



The Cistercian Graveyard in Calvary Hill Cemetery, Dallas, Texas.

During the last forty years, seven members of Our Lady of Dallas lived and died in Dallas and were buried in the Abbey's plot in Calvary Hill Catholic Cemetery.

Fr. Victor Falubíró

Born on October 11, 1908, as Nicholas Friskics in Muraszombat, Hungary (today Murska Subota in Slovenia), he entered the abbey of Zirc as a novice on August 29, 1926. He was ordained a priest in 1931 and became a teacher of history and Latin. From his young years he played several instruments and, as a teacher in the Cistercian Schools of Eger and Baja, conducted youth orchestras and choirs. When the Order was suppressed in 1950, Fr. Victor became organist in the village of Vaskút. In 1964 he obtained permission to make a trip to New Brunswick, Ohio where he had relatives. As he came to visit the monastery of Dallas, he decided not to return to Hungary and to remain in Dallas for the rest of his life. Between 1966 and 1972 he taught piano in the Cistercian Prep School. He had, however, immense difficulties with learning English. Finally, in 1972 he moved to Fort Worth where he became chaplain of the convent Our Lady of Victory. In May of 1975 he was unexpectedly diagnosed with cancer and died shortly after surgery on June 4, 1975.



Fr. Leonard Bartu

Born on April 18, 1897, in Cibakháza, Hungary, he entered the novitiate on the eve of World War I, August 14, 1914. He was ordained a priest on July 31, 1921. He obtained graduate degrees in classics and French. Until 1948, he was a teacher of Latin and French in the Cistercian School of Baja in Hungary where he was one of the most respected teachers as well as a well-known civic leader. The water sports institute he ran on the river Danube offered a recreational outlet to thousands of youths in the city, inside and outside the Cistercian School. As the Order was suppressed in 1950, he had no choice but to do menial jobs. Nonetheless, in 1953 he was arrested on drummed up charges, interrogated under torture, and finally sentenced to 14 years of prison for high treason and conspiracy against the People's Republic. The freedom fighters of 1956 freed him as a political prisoner. As the revolution failed, Fr. Leonard, fearful of being returned to prison, left Hungary in November of 1956. After working as a chaplain in various refugee camps, he joined the community of Dallas on February 2, 1960. Here he was chaplain to the Hungarian community and took care of the abbey's sacristy. In the early sixties the students of Cistercian saw him many times carrying his boat down to the Trinity river for daily exercise. His dream was to recreate the water sports club of his younger years and to publish a critique of Marxism. He died on April 28, 1978.



Fr. Odo Egres

Born as Joseph Eifried in Gádor, Hungary, he attended the Cistercian School of Baja where he graduated from high school in 1938. On August 29 of the same year he became a novice of the abbey of Zirc. He was ordained a priest in 1944. He obtained his Ph.D. in German language and literature in 1947. Because his family was of German nationality, he was allowed to leave Hungary in 1949, one year before the Order's suppression. He lived in Wisconsin for a year, then taught in a Chicago Catholic school (1950-1951). Afterwards he did post-graduate study in Buffalo, N.Y. He moved to Texas in 1953 and for two years taught school at Our Lady of Victory in Ft. Worth.



He was on the first faculty of the University of Dallas as it opened in 1956, teaching German language and literature. Throughout his life he kept publishing. His biography of St. Bernard of Clairvaux (*St. Bernard: His Life and Teaching*, 1961) has been particularly successful. In 1990 it was translated into both Italian and Hungarian. In 1970 Fr. Odo underwent surgery for cancer of the kidney. During the sabbatical year which followed, he appeared to have been cured. He received much inner strength and inspiration from his studies of the mystical spirituality of St. Mechtild of Helfta about whom he wrote several scholarly and devotional papers. In May 1979 the cancer resurfaced in his bones. After much physical suffering he died on August 4, 1979.

Fr. Thomas Fehér

Born on March 31, 1911, in Tápiószéle as Joseph Fehér, he entered the monastery of Zirc at the age of 20, receiving the name Thomas. He took his first vows on August 30, 1932. He was ordained a priest on June 29, 1938. In the same year he received a Master of Arts degree with a major in history and geography and began to teach in the Cistercian School of Pécs (1938-39). For a year (1939-1940) he was assistant pastor in Szentgotthárd, then went on to teach in the Cistercian School of Székesfehérvár (1940-1947).



In connection of the Communists' campaign against Catholic schools, he was arrested on drummed up charges and sentenced to a short term of imprisonment for "anti-democratic propaganda." After the trial he was released from prison, but the prosecution appealed his light sentence and confidential sources informed him that another arrest was being planned. In 1948, on the advice of his abbot, Fr. Thomas left Hungary and asked for asylum in Austria. When this request was granted, he became the first formal political refugee of the Abbey of Zirc in the West. He arrived in the United States in 1949 and joined the Cistercian community in Spring Bank (1949-1954). In 1954 he came to Texas and taught in Catholic schools in Ft. Worth and Dallas.

When the monastery opened in 1958, he became the first novice master. From 1963 until his retirement due to ill health in 1976, he taught geography at the Cistercian Prep School. He took care of the sacristy and served as chaplain of the Hungarian community of the metropolplex. In January of 1980 he underwent heart surgery. While recovering, on Feb. 5, 1980, he died from an unexpected heart attack.

Deeply rooted in his Hungarian upbringing, Fr. Thomas was a dearly loved member of the community. He was a man of deep faith, an exemplary priest, and dedicated to community life.

Fr. Lambert Simon

Born on November 2, 1913 in Székesfehérvár, he graduated from the local Cistercian high school. He took the habit of novices in Zirc on August 29, 1932. He was ordained a priest on June 29, 1939. After obtaining a graduate degree in biology and geography, he worked as an assistant pastor and then as a teacher in Budapest. He was deeply involved in social and pastoral assistance; his sermons drew large crowds and were transmitted on national radio.



In 1950, immediately before the suppression of the Order, he left Hungary by crossing the "iron curtain" illegally with the help of friends and soon thereafter came to the United States. He was cellarer in Spring Bank, but in the fall of 1953, even before the canonical visitation, he

moved to Texas. To prepare for teaching at the University of Dallas, he continued his studies in science at St. Louis University and obtained a master's degree in chemistry. He began teaching at UD in 1960. He contributed much to the development of the university's pre-med program and organized the first computer center at UD. As a teacher he was very much feared *and* liked. For decades he did pastoral assistance at the parish of St. John the Apostle in Richland Hills.

As his widowed mother's only son, he was most anxious about returning to Hungary before she died. In 1964 he was able to see her in Vienna, but her sudden death prevented him from visiting her again. After her death, Fr. Lambert became more reclusive and, when visiting Hungary became possible, decided never to return.

After a stroke in 1979, he retired from teaching. He died in his sleep in the monastery's lakehouse in Flower Mound on June 19, 1981. In the absence of Abbot Anselm, Bishop Tschoepe buried him.

Fr. Louis Lékaí

Born as Julius Lepárt on February 4, 1916, he attended the Cistercian School of Budapest. He entered the Cistercian Order on August 29, 1934. He was ordained a priest on June 24, 1941. In 1942 he obtained a doctorate in history at the University of Budapest. For the next four years he taught history at the Cistercian School in Eger. After the war in the summer of 1945, he proposed to Abbot Wendelin the plan of going to America to initiate the foundation of a school and of a monastery by the Abbey of Zirc. For this purpose he recruited several of his friends, including Fr. Anselm who had been his classmate and a companion in the novitiate. He emigrated to the United States in 1947.



Until 1953 Fr. Louis lived in the monastery of Spring Bank in Wisconsin. After the visitation of 1953 he moved to Buffalo where he taught history at the university. In 1955 he moved to Dallas and taught at the University of Dallas for the rest of his active life. His distinguished career as a professor was well reflected in his numerous publications on Cistercian history. Both his comprehensive volumes, *The White Monks* (1955) followed by *Cistercians: Ideal and Reality* (1979), were translated into German, French, Italian, Spanish, Dutch, Hungarian and Japanese. For eleven years (1965-1976) he was the Prior of Our Lady of Dallas.

On October 19, 1981, he suffered a stroke that partially paralyzed and debilitated him. Though he lost his ability both to speak and to write, he remained conscious and lucid. At the end of his life even the amputation of one of his legs became necessary. He lived for thirteen years in a nursing home in Dallas, as an example of patient and prayerful suffering. He died on July 1, 1994.

Fr. Rudolph Zimányi

Born on May 13, 1923, in Hódoscsépány, Hungary, Francis Zimányi attended the Cistercians' college preparatory school in Eger, Hungary. In 1942 he entered the novitiate of the Cistercian Monastery of Zirc. In his monastic family he was given the name Rudolph. After his perpetual vows he was ordained to the priesthood on June 24, 1947. An avid student of French language and literature, he was sent to Paris for further studies in 1948. In 1950, when the Communist regime suppressed the monastery of Zirc, he was directed by his superiors to remain abroad and to join the rest of the community in the monastery of Spring Bank, Wisconsin. He continued his studies at Marquette in Milwaukee and decided to join the new foundation in Texas.



He came to Our Lady of Dallas in 1960 and immediately began teaching at the University of Dallas. His Ph.D. in French literature was granted in 1963 by Northwestern University in Chicago. His dissertation, *Pascal in the Works of François Mauriac*, made him an expert on two outstanding figures of French literature, Blaise Pascal of the 17th century and the Catholic novelist of this century, François Mauriac.

Until his retirement in May 1993, he taught French at the University of Dallas. As a priest, he served at various parishes of the metroplex, for the longest time as a confessor at St. Maria Goretti parish in Arlington. He earned recognition as a Hungarian poet, publishing three volumes.

After a six-month battle with cancer, he died on November 22, 1994.