



LETTER FROM THE ABBOT

August 15, 1990

DEAR FRIENDS,

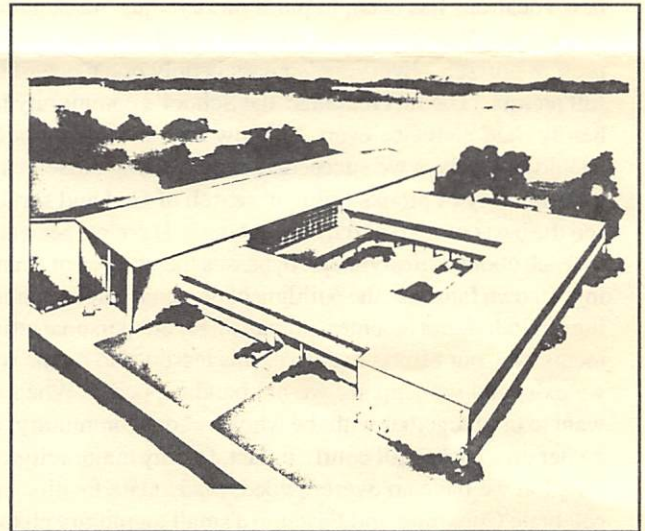
From Christmas to Christmas so many things happen around here that one newsletter cannot keep you informed. The end of the summer seems to be the best time for an update. We have also revised our list of addresses so that some of you who have been in communication with us for quite a while are now receiving the Abbey's Newsletter for the first time. I hope to be able to keep writing you semiannually.

The "Big News": Abbey Chapel

Many of you have already heard about this news item, and you will all hear about it many more times. Since the end of January we have been increasingly involved in a very important and somewhat overdue enterprise. We would like to have a church, or to use a more modest term, a chapel, the Cistercian Abbey Chapel.

WHY?

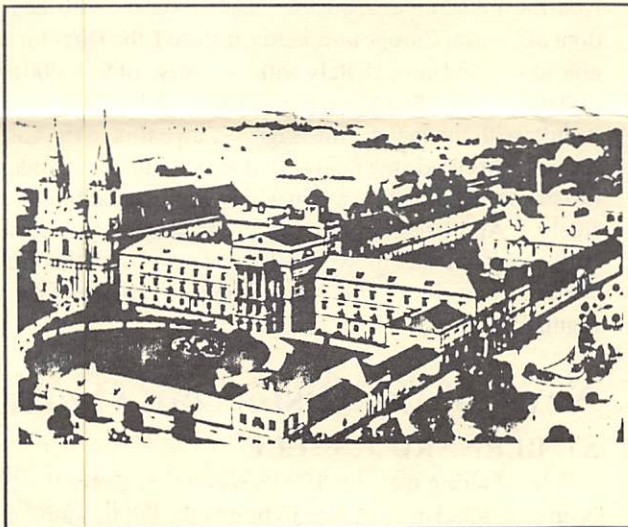
The origins of the project go back almost 35 years. After all, when a Cistercian monastery is founded, the building of a church is always part of the plan. In our case the first "temporary chapel" was in our present Refectory. We then settled for about 30 years with our present "temporary" chapel. The files of the Abbey contain two drawings from the '60's depicting an Abbey Church, a clear proof that the plan was not dead, only dormant. Then, last January an inquiry came from some alumni about the possibility of building a



Architect's sketch of Cistercian Abbey with chapel (1960)

chapel--at a time when the conviction had come about in my own mind that such a project is essential for the future of both Abbey and School. After meetings with a few alumni, then three meetings with the Abbey's community, it had become clear: the next thing that we all need, and need badly, is a chapel--a place of worship, a building that expresses what we are, a project that serves, connects and unifies Abbey and School, a central building that manifests first to ourselves, then to everyone else that we are a home for a religious community.

Our construction projects have always served the current needs. First, we built homes for the monks teaching at the University and serving in pastoral capacities all over the Metroplex. Then, we constructed school buildings because we wanted to create a secondary school. We built classrooms, then playgrounds, finally a gymnasium. As our school grew, it needed more classrooms, more and better science facilities. Thus, the gorgeous Science Building with its Lecture Hall came about.



Cistercian Abbey of Zirc, Hungary

We cannot say we are fully "set": the School can present a long list of improvements and facilities that would be needed--from a "Media Center" to a full stadium, better sports facilities, more offices, and so on. A great deal can be mentioned and, in fact, neither the growth nor the improvements should ever stop. But looking ahead, the School is at the threshold of five to ten critical years. If it wants to hold onto its basis and the structures that guaranteed its identity and truly phenomenal success, it must remain a Cistercian Prep School. For that it needs the survival of the Cistercian Abbey. From this point of view we are approaching a danger zone.

For a long time the Abbey has invested all its personal and financial resources into the School, and has seen all sorts of tremendous success. Only the recruitment of new vocations has been, to put it mildly, "just moderately" successful. Why? The full answer is probably beyond our present horizon. Everyone's guess is only one piece of the full picture. The fact remains: the School's community has hardly had a chance even to know the Abbey as it is (or should be). Have we succeeded in expressing ourselves as a community of monks living in search of God and serving (on the basis of that search) the School? Have we been able to teach about a lifestyle that bypasses the worries of founding our own families, the building of personal careers, counting our individual incomes, preparing for our personal retirements? In our efforts to deliver this lesson also by the way we exist and worship are we not handicapped? When we want to pray together with the whole school community, we gather on a basketball court. In fact, for any major religious function we have an overcrowded, inadequate facility: we celebrate Christmas and Easter in a small temporary chapel; when we pray our daily office we hit each other's elbows in our narrow, "temporary" choir stalls; even as we held our burial services we either used rented space or labored under such crowded conditions that the main rule was, Make the Funeral Mass as short and fast as possible. The same applied to ordinations, the taking of religious vows, the "Mass of the Middle School," sometimes even to weddings and baptisms. The Cistercian Abbey as a religious institution cannot function, cannot become viable without a chapel.

Don't read the above litany of issues as complaints, but as the worries of an abbot who knows that he will never explain to his students, visitors, or prospective candidates what this monastery is all about as long as the obvious reality that hits the eye speaks against it: we have built everything except adequate space for prayer, liturgy, worship.

THE ULTIMATE EQUATION

The School needs the Abbey for its survival, but the Abbey needs a chapel for its survival. Therefore, both the Abbey and the School need a chapel for their joint survival. Everyone who has passed a first course in algebra (grade 8 at Cistercian) must see the unassailable logic of the above statement.

I think I will start my homily at the next opening ceremony in the Gymnasium with the well-known phrase, "We should stop meeting like this. . . ." We should see to it that we celebrate in a chapel, and that our boys learn about prayer and liturgy and their importance under proper circumstances. Even so-called "independent schools" consider it essential to build a chapel on their campus. In this, at least, we must imitate them.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE SO FAR?

How much actual work have we done so far? After preliminary meetings of the Abbey's community, a "Chapel Committee" was formed from alumni leaders last spring. Alumnus Gary Cunningham (Class '72), one of the most distinguished young architects of the Metroplex, was chosen to design the chapel and then during the summer a brochure was put together for distribution during the first weeks of September.

Whether or not the Chapel Project is feasible will become clear during the current school year of 1990-1991. For the outcome to be positive we must generate enough enthusiasm and support among the parents of the current enrollment, among the alumni, the alumni parents and other supporters, past and present, of both Abbey and School. You will be hearing much more about our project.

As "first fruits" let me mention two tangible results. On the level of ideas, the School's literary magazine *Reflections 1990* has a beautiful article by James McDermott (Class '91) in which the youngest members of our Cistercian Family reflect on the project as a tool for building both the community and the future of Cistercian. The second fact pertains to finances. A Hungarian Catholic publishing house had been benefitting for about 15 years from my Hungarian publications (8-10 books on liturgy, theology, and biblical studies). Because of the political situation in Hungary, they had not been able to pay royalties for my works. They heard from me this summer about the Chapel Project. With the freedom of Central Europe now being restored, the Director was able to respond immediately with a promise of \$10,000 (yes, dollars) for the Chapel project. The check has duly arrived in July with the laconic message: "I owe this to the Cistercians." This made me realize that we should never underestimate the unexpected ways in which we are repaid for giving freely. And I hold my breath to see whether the Eastern European publisher for whom just one member of this Abbey worked "part-time" will be matched in generosity by our regular friends.

News of the Cistercian Order

ST. BERNARD JUBILEE

During the year 1990 a number of festivities have been scheduled in commemoration of the 900th anniversary of the birth of St. Bernard of Clairvaux. Not many people in history are remembered 900 years after their birth. In St.

Bernard's case about 1315 Cistercian monks, 1161 Cistercian nuns, 1500 Trappists, and 1000 Trappistines celebrate him as their spiritual father and guide. St. Bernard was not the founder of the Cistercian Order, but he was the person who made the Cistercian Order into a worldwide movement in the 12th century and assured its survival in history. As a historical figure, he is credited with restoring the unity of the Church after the schism of Anacletus II, an antipope elected against Innocent II in 1130. The Second Crusade began under his leadership and exercised a deep impact on Western spirituality. St. Bernard founded the abbey of Clairvaux in France, from which a great deal of spiritual influence radiated over all of Europe for more than a century, from Ireland to the Baltic States, from Sweden to southern Sicily. Most permanently, St. Bernard's memory has survived through his many writings. His extant works alone fill nine large volumes in their modern critical edition.

For the Abbey of Dallas it is noteworthy that Zirc, the Hungarian Abbey from which the Cistercians came to Texas, was itself directly founded from Clairvaux in 1182, 29 years after St. Bernard's death.

Our Abbey has already participated in several commemorative events, and plans to participate in some of those still in preparation:

a) In January, Abbot Denis was one of the invited speakers at a convention of the Benedictines, Cistercians and Trappists in Brasil. The conference provided a rare opportunity to experience both the harsh realities of church life in developing countries and the incredible vitality and promise that the Church in Brasil offers.

b) In March and February of 1990, the Institute of Contemplative Studies at the University of Dallas held, under the direction of Professor Frank Swietek, three colloquies on St. Bernard. Professor John Sommerfeldt presented St. Bernard's understanding of the mystical experience, Professor Steven Maddux spoke of St. Bernard's influence on medieval literature, and Abbot Denis Farkasfalvy surveyed the discovery of St. Bernard as a theologian in the theological literature of the last fifty years.

c) Our annual Book Fair in February chose a medieval theme and included an exhibit on St. Bernard. Facsimiles of old manuscripts, old editions of his works, a number of old pictures of the Saint, and maps showing the location of Clairvaux and its foundations offered an introduction to his personality and influence.

d) May 5-9, the yearly Medieval Congress at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo held concurrent sessions on St. Bernard and Cistercian Spirituality. From the University of Dallas Professors Frank, DiLorenzo, and Sommerfeldt made presentations. From the Cistercian Order Abbot Denis Farkasfalvy and Fr. Luke Anderson, Prior of St. Mary's Abbey in Pennsylvania, gave papers. It is of importance for many readers of this newsletter that for the first time an alumnus of the Cistercian Preparatory School, John Ruffing,

a member of Class '80 and a doctoral student at Cornell University, gave a paper at this convention. He spoke on medieval Irish history.

e) On Sunday, August 19, 1990, the 5:30 PM evening mass in the parish church of St. Bernard of Clairvaux will be concelebrated by the priests of the parish and the Cistercian Abbey. The mass in honor of St. Bernard will anticipate his feast the following day. The Abbey's priests will lead the Gregorian chant, and Abbot Denis will preach the homily. We hope to see many of you at the mass and afterwards at the reception. (St. Bernard of Clairvaux parish is located near White Rock Lake, 1404 Old Gate Lane.)

f) On September 11-14, 1990, an International Congress, jointly sponsored by the Cistercians and the Trappists, will be held in Rome, Italy. The program consists of twelve conferences on St. Bernard's spirituality. Each topic will be handled by a speaker and a respondent. Thus, twenty-four speakers have been "lined up" from eleven different countries. There will be simultaneous translation in English, French, German and Italian. From our Abbey Abbot Denis and Fr. Roch will participate and present papers.

CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE: NEW CISTERCIAN BEGINNINGS

With the collapse of the Communist regimes in East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, the suppressed Cistercian communities are beginning to revive. While the Cistercian monasteries in Poland were never suppressed, 40-45 years of suppression in these three countries have totally ruined a number of previously flourishing monastic communities. The Czech monasteries have been the worst hit. Their membership was ethnically diverse. Most of the German-speaking monks and nuns were expelled from Bohemia and relocated to East or West Germany. Only a small minority of the religious managed to stay in the country. Nevertheless, these monasteries have begun their first efforts to regroup. The monastery of Osseg has already elected a new abbot and hopes to return to its ancient buildings. In East Germany two communities of Cistercian nuns and a group of Cistercian priests are also trying to capitalize on their regained freedom.

In Hungary, the restoration of our Order has produced some very encouraging progress. During the summer several of us returned to participate in chapter meetings. Fr. Placid and Fr. Roch led a community retreat for "the survivors": of the 57 Cistercians now living in Hungary almost 40 managed to convene for the three days. They completely filled the facility rented for the retreat. Based on our summer experiences in Hungary, I can also report the following:

A small community has already started regular life in a remodeled and rather large rural rectory where four novices and three priests have found accommodations and established a regular monastic schedule. In addition to teaching the novices, the priests also take care of four parishes in the neighborhood. The novices, for their part, have

shown extraordinary spirit and enthusiasm: it seems they will all take their vows in September and soon thereafter move to Rome for their studies in theology. Another group of three candidates have been admitted to the novitiate of 1990-91. The new novices will take the habit already in August so that for a month the house of the novitiate will be literally overcrowded! All seven new recruits are in their early twenties.

Regarding our old mother abbey, Zirc--the authorities have been rather slow in returning the building. At the present time only four Cistercian priests live in one wing of the building which is, by the way, in serious disrepair. The rest of the Abbey is still used as a boarding school which, supposedly, will be relocated by next summer. When and how our old schools will again become Cistercian institutions is a difficult question. But we are just impressed, amazed by (and here in Dallas very envious of), the abundant flow of vocations. This has been the greatest God's gift during the past year.

In **Budapest**, the huge parish of St. Emery which our Order built and developed before the war is again in Cistercian hands. While two Cistercians are presently running the parish, a third has started teaching religion in our old school adjacent to the parish church. The restoration of religious education is, in fact, one of the highest priorities of the Church in Hungary. Yet, judging from the difficulties one hears about, it seems that teaching religion after 40 years of communism is like starting an irrigation project in the Sahara Desert.

Fr. Julius was invited by our Abbot General to go to Rome and serve as one of his assistants. Among other duties he will be the prefect of the Cistercian seminarians who study in Rome, including the four from Hungary. Although we will miss him badly, we know that he is going for an important purpose.

COMMUNITY NEWS

a) **Br. Mark** graduated in May from the University of Dallas with a major in philosophy and a minor in math. He will begin studying theology in the fall at UD. He will also teach computer at the Prep School.

b) The **new entrance** of the Abbey has been completed: the statue of St. Bernard, formerly in the lobby, now stands in front of the main entrance with the emblem of the monastery

above it.

c) At **Easter** six Prep School students (one senior and five juniors) spent three days in the monastery, participating in the Abbey's life and the Holy Week services. They listened to conferences and prayed the Divine Office with the community. All said they had a good time. They compared their experience to the collapse of the Berlin Wall: finally, they know now what the Abbey is like inside--and upstairs. And that the monks are people, almost like regular people!

d) In April our **Abbot General**, Fr. Polycarp Zakar, arrived from Rome and spent almost three weeks in our monastery. His main purpose was to finish reorganizing the constitutions that tie our abbey to its revived Hungarian roots, and to seek help and advice for restoring Cistercian life in Hungary.

e) As school was out, nine Prep School students (Forms VI-VIII) went with four Cistercians (Frs. Peter, Roch, Julius and Br. Mark) to the Taos Ski Valley in New Mexico for ten days of **common vacation** in a rented cabin. As it seems, this vacation continued reducing the "Berlin Wall effect" referred to above by opening new paths of communication between Abbey and School.

f) **Two seniors** of 1990 (actually new alumni) accompanied **Fr. Gregory** to Spain, France and Italy. They relied heavily on the hospitality of a number of Cistercian institutions in these countries, making their trip more pleasant--and less expensive.

g) August 16-19 our community holds its annual retreat. We have invited Fr. Timothy Horner OSB, the first headmaster of the St. Louis Priory School, a British foundation in St. Louis, Mo. The school just preceded the foundation of our Prep School and helped us, in many ways, find our path in the pioneer days. Fr. Timothy is presently the pastor of the St. Louis Abbey Church.

h) September 2-7, our Order holds its General Chapter in Rome. At this event all abbots and a number of delegates convene to discuss matters of common concern. Our monastery elected Fr. Peter to accompany the Abbot as the delegate of the community.

CLOSING WORDS

This coming school year is unusually important for our Abbey. Keep in your prayers the future of our community with all its projects and hopes.