



# LETTER FROM THE ABBOT

AUGUST 15, 1991

Greetings!

Before the summer is over and we are back to school again, I would like to give you an update on the Abbey's news. At the same time I offer you my wish that you have the leisure in these last weeks of summer to read this newsletter without undue hurry. May it find you in a hopeful, positive, and forward-looking mood.

## CHAPEL NEWS

### Project Update

Throughout the summer many of you have asked me, How is the Chapel Project doing? The Chapel Committee, made up of three Cistercians (Fr. Abbot, Fr. Bernard, Fr. Peter, '73), seven alumni (Co-Chairmen Jim Moroney, '74, and Jere Thompson, '74, Architect Gary Cunningham, '72, Building Manager Wade Andres, '75, Peter Smith, '74, Ed Johnson, '80, Andrew Roberts '83) and the School's Development Director Mrs. Jan Pritchett, have been working very hard for the last six months on two "battlegrounds." We have tried to bring the Chapel Campaign to a successful end and, at the same time, finalize the details and the cost of the project. Of course, anticipated cost and funds actually raised must

match. Although the Committee has been very successful on both fronts, our efforts have not quite come to an end as yet. We have finalized the budget of the Chapel at \$1,175,000. This does not include a substantial amount of donated material and work, nor does it include the "contingencies," those surprises that surface during the construction of the building. More than 90% of the budget has already been collected. But the fundraising is not complete. A number of pledges are still to be paid, and we are

still awaiting responses from a few foundations and some individuals. These uncertainties give rise to others: How well can we furnish the new Chapel? When will we have in hand the \$150,000 endowment necessary for its continued upkeep. All



*ARCHITECT'S REVISED MODEL OF THE NEW CHAPEL*

this means: Your (additional) help is still very welcome!

## **Blessing of the Site**

As you might have read in the School's Newsletter, during the celebration of Solemn Vespers presided over by Bishop Grahmann on Sunday, June 9, we performed a ceremony blessing of the site and marking the official beginning of construction. Over a hundred participants assembled for the occasion -- including parents of the earliest graduating classes and current First Formers with their parents.

## **Groundbreaking**

With the "basic building" financed and with very favorable bids obtained, the day time came on July 22 to actually break ground. Only on July 29, however, as the heavy machinery began eating away substantial chunks of the hill, did we realize the seriousness of this beginning. As I write, the site is fully excavated; by the time you read these lines, the concrete foundation of the building will have been laid.

## **NEW MEMBERS OF THE ABBEY**

### **Three Candidates for the Novitiate**

During the months of April and May, three young men applied for and were granted admission to the Abbey. They have already received their rooms in the monastery, and are preparing to begin a year of introduction and probation as novices. After a three-day retreat the candidates will receive the Cistercian habit on the evening of Saturday, August 17, during the celebration of vespers. For one year they will be trained in the spirituality, history and traditions of the Order and will be introduced into the life of the community. They will have a regular schedule of classes and will be taught by various members of the community under the direction of the Abbot and the Master of Novices, Fr. Roch. If they persevere, they may take temporary vows in August of 1992 and will afterwards begin (or continue) formal studies for the priesthood.

Two of these candidates, Price Oswalt and Kent Easley, were graduate students of theology in San Antonio. The third, John Douglas, has

finished his junior year at the University of Texas in Austin. Should you come to visit the Abbey during the coming school year, you will see again monks dressed all in white: these are the novices! They receive their black scapular on the day they take their first vows next year.

Through this Newsletter -- and in every other conceivable way -- we are asking for your prayers that our novices may become permanent and happy members of our community. Please offer up some daily prayers for their spiritual needs. From the day they enter the Abbey, they themselves will be praying daily for you as one of the friends and benefactors of our community. Your spiritual support will mean a great deal for them.

## **CISTERCIAN RENEWAL IN HUNGARY**

### **Retreat by Abbot Denis**

On June 24, the Cistercians of Hungary gathered for a retreat conducted by the Abbot of Our Lady of Dallas. About 38 members convened. In Hungary we still do not possess a facility capable of holding more than ten people at once. Therefore, the retreat took place in the major seminary of Eger, a city in which a Cistercian community has lived and taught for almost two centuries (1776 - 1950). The concluding conference of the retreat was held in the city's Cistercian Church.

All the participants showed great interest in learning the details of the long and arduous process by which our monastery in Dallas has adapted our centuries-old traditions to a new social and cultural environment and thus managed to survive and succeed. After 40 years of suppression in Hungary, any attempt to "reconstruct the past" is doomed to failure. The task they face is very similar to the one our community faced 35 years ago in Dallas.

### **Young vocations**

Of course, 35 years ago we were much younger than they are now. Those who survived the years of persecution in Hungary are now be-

tween 56 and 86. However, God provides: the recruitment of new members is happening at such an amazing rate that only God's special providence can explain it. Since the summer of 1989 eleven young men, all between 20 and 28, have asked for admission to the Order in Hungary. Four of these have completed their novitiate and a year of studies in Rome. Three others are about to complete the novitiate and will move to Rome in September to begin their studies for the priesthood. Meanwhile, four new novices will receive the habit and begin their novitiate. Of course, our first and foremost task is to provide formation for these young men and to lead them in rebuilding what has been destroyed over the last forty years.

### Repossession of the Old Monasteries

During the summer the freely elected Hungarian Parliament has finally passed new legislation that governs the return of properties confiscated from the Church. However, repossession of former facilities still remains a major chore. Our old schools have been turned into public schools, and the monasteries are now being used by state or municipal agencies. They will be returned only if and when an adequate solution is found for the relocation of the current occupants. However, there is well-founded hope that substantial parts of the ancient Abbey of Zirc as well as two buildings in Budapest will be returned to us as soon as next spring. For the time being this seems to be adequate for our current membership.

### Re-opening our Schools?

Returning to the work of education will have to take place gradually. For the time being we have enough personnel to offer religion courses in our old schools. At one location, in the city of Pécs, two Cistercians have joined the full-time faculty of the formerly Cistercian school (now a public middle and high school). They will start a Cistercian-sponsored 5th grade (First Form!) in September of 1991. Their idea is to organize a "take-over from within" by adding a grade each year.

### "New World Order"?

While the phrase "New World Order" was more discredited than recognized by the Western media, my stay in Hungary has given me some hope that in Central Europe a new world is, indeed, being born. At 7 PM on June 30, 1991, all church bells throughout Hungary rang for one hour to mark the end of foreign occupation. Since the invasion of the country by the Nazis on March 19, 1944, Hungary was first under German then Russian occupation. By the end of June the last Russian troop left the country.

The ringing of the church bells is connected with an anecdote that should be added to Cistercian history. As the Russian Army "liberated" the town of Zirc, the commanding officer went to the Abbot and demanded that the church bells ring for an hour as an expression of their joy for being liberated. Allegedly, Abbot Wendelin replied, "I think half an hour should be enough; we will ring the bells for a whole hour when you leave." Abbot Wendelin died 10 years ago. As the bells were ringing in Hungary, the people of my generation started commemorating all those -- our parents included -- who had awaited this day but did not live to see it. I myself was eight years old when Hungary was first invaded. It is difficult to express how it felt to see my native country free of foreign occupation for the first time in my adult life.

### Personal News

Frs. Benedict, Henry and Bernard also visited Hungary this summer. Besides vacationing with family members, they participated in the festivities held by the city of Pásztó to commemorate the 800th anniversary of the foundation of the Cistercian monastery around which the city originally developed.

At the same time, Fr. Julius was back in Dallas planning to meet parents and alumni and offering summer assistance in various parishes. Unfortunately, his stay with us was cut short. Our Abbot General, whose co-worker he is, had to be hospitalized unexpectedly and thus called Fr. Julius back to Rome to take care of business for him.

During the next school year two additional

members of our community will be stationed in Rome. Fr. Gilbert will be the Director of the Rome Campus of the University of Dallas, while Fr. Robert will serve as its Campus Chaplain and Professor of English. Both are expected to be back home in the Fall of 1992.

In July and August Fr. David taught philosophy overseas. He offered two courses to the Cistercian clerics of Hungary, making it possible for them to start theology in Rome next Fall. On his way back to Dallas, at the end of August, he will stop in England to participate at the annual Patristic Congress of Oxford.

Two more members of the community took advantage of the low overseas fares. Fr. Christopher toured Ireland, while Fr. Timothy perfected his French in France, staying mostly in Paris and Dijon. Fr. Moses has spent a large part of the summer in New York working on a new annotated bibliography of French works on Christopher Columbus.

We have had some unfortunate health problems. Fr. Placid and Fr. Roch both underwent back surgery. Neither operation had been anticipated, but both were successful. Full recovery is expected to take some more time and extended exercise. You will all be pleased to hear that Fr. Damian has recovered beautifully from his

fractured hip. He still uses a cane but, as far as I can tell, he uses it more for pointing than for leaning.

Fr. Peter, Br. Mark, and one of the candidates for the novitiate took eight students of the Cistercian Upper School for ten day trip to Colorado. They stayed near Crested Butte in the cabin of Dr. James Bush, Class '73 and classmate of Fr. Peter. The trip was helped substantially by the anonymous donation of another alumnus. Fr. Gregory has also visited the Rocky Mountains: with his father he drove all the way up to Montana. He was so impressed that his postcards contained more exclamations than narrative sentences.

## WISHING YOU THE BEST

Our community will begin its annual three-day retreat on the evening of August 14. The following week we will slowly but surely slip into our school year schedule. We ask your prayer and support for three special intentions:

- a) That our novices discern and follow God's will in their calling;
- b) That our community become ready to worship with one heart and one mind in our new chapel;
- c) That the Chapel be built successfully to the greater glory of God and the spiritual benefit of the whole Cistercian Family.

You can imagine the rest of our wish list. It is the usual -- good kids, happy parents, successful graduates, loyal alumni, faithful friends, faith and charity everywhere preserved!

*Abbot Denis Farkas-faleny*