

Cistercian Abbey Our Lady of Dallas
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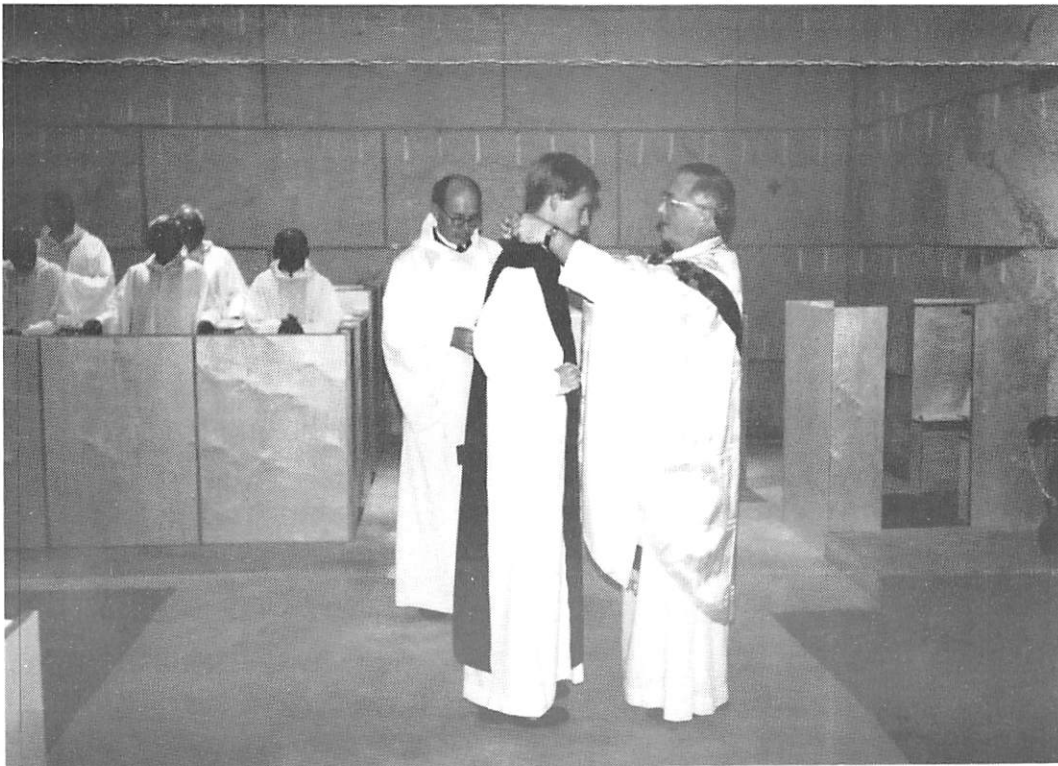
LETTER FROM THE ABBOT

Summer, 1992

Abbot Denis Farkasfalvy

GREETINGS

St. Paul urges us to console one another with the consolation we have received from God. This letter will reach you later than originally planned, but it will, I hope, serve as a means of consolation and encouragement drawn from the experiences of our community over the past nine months.



Br. Edmund receives the black scapular from Abbot Denis in the Abbey Church

APOLOGIES AND THANKS

On August 6, just as I was getting ready to prepare my letter to our friends, I had to undergo a fourfold by-pass operation, unexpectedly. This was my second by-pass surgery; the first took place exactly ten years ago, in the summer of 1982. Just as ten years ago, I was again able to avoid an actual heart attack so that complete recovery was promised. Of course, a little more experienced now, I know that no recovery is ever "complete." Yet I am quite grateful. Due to the good services of Dr. Stephen Johnston (Class '71), my problems were quickly identified, the best available help was immediately obtained and recovery has been fast.

My brief stay at Baylor Medical Center was full of surprises about how strong and wide the Cistercian family has grown: I received wonderful visits and advice daily from, among others, Dr. James Shelton, the cardiologist father of Joseph, Class '91; Dr. Thomas Meyers, Chief Cardiac Surgeon at Baylor and his son, Derek (former member of Class '91); the Thieles, both Dr. and Mrs. Peter Thiele, and their son Stefan, Class '89, who worked throughout the summer in the hospital. I should not leave out the name of Dr. Chris Hellman, Class '78, working as an anaesthesiologist at Baylor who also came by several times. It

ownership of the schools, and contract the present faculties to "keep on doing their work." Then he quickly dispatched two Cistercians to each school with the task of starting optional religious education classes for the whole student body and beginning an official "First Form" to be raised in Catholic Christian spirit under the direct supervision of a Cistercian. At the present this is all he has been able to do. This new beginning is succeeding differently in the different cities. Most promising so far is the school in the city of Pécs (a city of about 120,000 inhabitants in Southern Hungary) where both a First and a Second Form are already in operation, the parents are quite active, and the school is running a small newspaper to inform parents, students, benefactors and city officials of their plans and achievements.

FR. BERNARD SPEAKS AT CONVENTION

Under these circumstances it was quite providential that Fr. Bernard, the Headmaster of our school in Irving, received an invitation to address a national conference on the renewal of education in Hungary, with particular emphasis on private and religious schools. His presentation created so much interest that the evening's remaining program was replaced by a question-and-answer period about the Cistercian Preparatory School in Texas.

The road to renewal in Hungary will be long. But our own road has not been short or easy. Our school in Texas has just reached the mature age of 30, one full generation.

OLD FRIEND VISITS AS RETREAT MASTER

This year's annual retreat was held in the Abbey by Fr. Aelred Cody, Benedictine of St. Meinrad Abbey in Indiana. An old school mate of some (Fr. Roch, Fr. Julius and Fr. Denis) and a professor of Old Testament to others (Fr. Gregory and Fr. Peter), Fr. Cody has surprised us with his exceptional scholarship not only of Scripture but also various ancient monastic traditions and languages of all sorts. He was repeatedly caught in the library reading Hungarian books with apparent ease. His conferences were quite enjoyable.

CONSTRUCTION: PROJECTS COMPLETED AND FURTHER PLANS

1) Abbey Church

The Abbey Church was essentially completed for its dedication on May 10, 1992. As is the nature of most construction projects, a number of small details were left for the summer and beyond. We are still awaiting the kneelers and some detail work on the gutters; the landscaping in front of the Church and in the courtyard had to be postponed because of some concrete work to be completed first. The final word on the light and sound systems has not been said: balancing and adjusting are still going on. On the other hand, a handsome new concrete path leading from the School to the Church has been completed, and with the beginning of the school year the traffic on the path has become quite frequent. The use of the Church has slowly expanded. During the last three months we celebrated two baptisms and three special memorial masses. The attendance at our Sunday Mass (9 AM with Gregorian chant) has doubled. Peak attendance occurred at our School's opening mass on Aug 26. All seats were taken and ten priests concelebrated. About 500 people were assembled.

2) New Roofs

After completion of the Abbey Church, we had to re-roof the west wing of the Abbey. Although this is the most recent wing of the monastery (constructed in 1964-65), its roof has deteriorated faster than those of the older wings. The skylights of the lobby were also leaking and needed replacement. The new roof has already weathered several torrential thunderstorms. The new skylight praises the expertise of the company of Billy Dunne, a former student of Class '72.

3) Plans for Remodeling the Old Chapel

Plans have been made for the utilization of the old chapel. One fifth of the room will serve as a small chapel for private masses, especially masses said by the sick and the aged fathers or masses for small groups. The rest of the space will be turned into the Abbey's library, which currently occupies several parts of the building. We hope to be able to begin the remodeling of the old chapel in the fall.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE ABBEY

Counting those who have entered the past year, the membership of the Abbey has again risen to 30. Fr. Robert, after a year of chaplaincy at the UD campus in Rome, has returned home and is teaching English at the main campus of the University. However, four of our members are still on permanent assignment elsewhere. Fr. Balthasar is at his parish in Grapevine; Fr. Louis, paralyzed by a stroke, lives in the Professional Care Center in Dallas; Fr. Ralph, after having served as the Music Director of the Cathedral of Cologne, now

past two years, enjoyed a very successful experience teaching Pre-Algebra and Algebra in the Cistercian Summer School. Both the Math Department and the Abbey are looking forward to his full-time employment in our School beginning in the fall of 1993. During the present school year he is completing his work for a Master's Degree in theology. Meanwhile he continues teaching computer programming to the CPS First Formers.

Fr. Julius has returned to the Abbey and the Prep School after his two years of service as assistant to the Abbot General in Rome. He is Form Master of our new First Form (Class 2000i), which for the first time numbers among its members the son of an alumnus, Brian McAuliff, son of Steve McAuliff (Class '71).

ENCOURAGING NEWS FROM HUNGARY

During the summer, Hungary went through shocks of anxiety, feeling dramatically the troubles that rocked the now defunct Yugoslavia and the disbanded Soviet Union. Hungary has its longest border with Yugoslavia and so far has had to care for more than 30,000 refugees from Croatia and Bosnia. To the North of Hungary, Czechoslovakia is in the process of breaking into two pieces. To the East ethnic tension is erupting all the way from Romania to Vladivostok. Nevertheless, cautious optimism and surprising stability reign in Hungary. Economic woes are mixed with good news of successful new companies, and there is no sign of food storage.

In this context, the Hungarian religious orders have started a remarkable course of rebirth. Across the spectrum there is an impressive number of young and generous vocations, but both the facilities and the personnel for their formation are inadequate or missing. The number of young Cistercians who have joined our Order since the demise of communism has reached 14 (11 simply professed, 3 novices), yet there is still not one single house with enough space for a community of more than 5-6 men. The novitiate is still in temporary facilities, and the young clerics who have begun their studies for the priesthood live in the Abbot General's residence in Rome.

However, a number of promising signs have been noted. The Cistercians have been promised that a larger section of the Abbey of Zirc will be evacuated and returned by March of 1993. During the summer the Cistercians were greatly surprised when our old schools (all the five of them) were returned to our Order as their "owner," Abbot Charles of Zirc hastily ran from one place to another to sign contracts, accept the

Both Br. Edmund and Br. Paul joined the Abbot and Fr. Peter for a summer trip to Colorado. We were privileged to use a fully furnished and more than fully comfortable cottage on the Taylor River near Gunnison, courtesy of Jim Bush (Class '73). We had the most gorgeous Colorado weather you could hope for.

Br. Mark, who has been teaching computer programming and religion in the Prep School for the

BR. PAUL'S NOVITIATE

At the beginning of January, Br. Paul McCormick joined our Abbey as a novice. His novitiate continues through the Fall Semester and is expected to take his first vows by the first of the year. Br. Paul has already completed studies in philosophy at the University of Dallas and has obtained, in addition to his B.A., a Master's Degree in Business Administration.

Many thanks for all the help, especially your prayers, by which you have supported Br. Edmund so that he could reach this first milestone of his life in our Abbey. We need your continued prayers. He now begins his philosophy studies and intends to graduate from the University of Dallas in 1994. (He had already spent three years at UT Austin before entering the monastery.) Then he will start graduate studies in theology leading to ordination. He is now 22 years old.

BROTHER EDMUND'S PROFESSION

Br. Edmund Douglas concluded his novitiate on August 22 and, during the Abbey's morning mass, made his first profession. In our Order, upon completion of the novitiate, a commitment is made for three years which is then to be renewed for another term of three years. In the course of this second term, the monk should make his final commitment in the form of perpetual and solemn vows. After his final vows he can be ordained as a priest.

felt as if the Cistercian family had specialized in matters of the heart -- in every sense of the word. The outpouring of sympathy, concern, love and prayer kept me floating on a cushion of strong confidence that God was leading me through this ordeal in the midst of many people who were constantly telling him to keep me under His protective wing. There is no way to thank all of you adequately for your cards, prayers, visits and calls. I praise God and ask Him to keep us all united in His love.

lives in Germany as chaplain of a Catholic nursing home; and Fr. Gilbert is still -- until Christmas -- Director of the Rome Campus of the University of Dallas. Join us in our prayers for more vocations.

YOUNG GUEST WITH "MONASTIC SCHOLARSHIP"

While I was in Hungary this summer, a 19-year-old young man approached me with a request. He wanted to live in our monastery for the school year to find out what the monastic life is like and to perfect his English. He had excellent recommendations from friends and appeared quite mature. After consulting the community, I invited him for the school year. He arrived September 10 and began immediately to follow the Abbey's schedule. He has some special chores of his own and is auditing classes at UD. If you meet in the monastery a tall young man with a Hungarian accent heavier than the average and a demeanor unexpectedly modest for a young Hungarian, you have run into the boy I am talking about, Peter Hadi from the town of Nagymaros. He is trying out the life of Our Lady of Dallas for purposes that, at present, only God knows.

PUBLICATIONS COMPLETED AND UNDERWAY

Since my last Newsletter, Fr. Roch Kerszky has published Jesus Christ: Fundamentals of

Christology, a bulky volume (439 pages) conceived of as a textbook for graduate theology students. The Proceedings of the International Conference on St. Bernard, which took place in Rome in 1991, have been published in Rome with one article by Abbot Denis Farkasfalvy ("The Beginning of Spiritual Life: Conversion") and one by Fr. Roch ("St. Bernard's Christological Thought"). Fr. James Lehrberger has finished editing a commemorative volume ("Festschrift") honoring U.D. philosophy professor Frederic Wilhelmsen on his 70th birthday. Fr. Moses Nagy is finishing his work on the figure of Christopher Columbus in French literature. For the first time some of Fr. Rudolph Zimányi's poetry has been published in various journals in Hungary. Finally, the homilies and meditations that Fr. Julius Lelóczy delivered on Vatican Radio over the past two years have been collected in a volume and will be published in Hungary at Christmas.

LOOKING FORWARD TO A GOOD YEAR

Whatever begins with difficulties must be continued with all the greater care and dedication, and it is almost guaranteed to be rooted more deeply in grace. We all look forward to a rewarding and successful school year. The Prep School has a record enrollment of 324. We hope that again in the course of this year a new applicant will turn to our novitiate. We also hope to remain with you in the union of prayer, service and love.

