

LETTER FROM THE ABBOT

Summer, 1994

OUR CREST: A HERITAGE SUMMARIZED

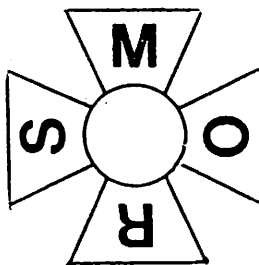
During the summer I read an essay published by the Cistercians in Hungary about the history and meaning of their crest. It is the same crest we used in designing our monastery's emblem. I am sure you would like to learn about the history and symbolism encapsulated in the emblem of our monastery and school.

We need to survey an 800-year old story. Our mother abbey, Zirc (pronounced Zeertz), was founded in 1181 by King Bela III. His wife, a French princess, knew how to get the best monastic founders available: the monks of Clairvaux were asked to come to Hungary. Less than 30 years after St. Bernard's death (1153) and seven years after his canonization (1174) Clairvaux was at the peak of its fame. The land given by the king for the new monastery was part of the royal hunting grounds in a deep forest, rich in wildlife. In the 12th century, Hungary was at the eastern edge of Western Christianity so that moving there from France probably felt something like a voyage from Hungary to Texas in the 1950's.



According to medieval customs the monastery needed an emblem. For their mascot they selected the crane, a bird abundantly present in local wildlife. These monks were well read and knew that, according to the "science" of the day, the crane was famous for its virtues of perseverance and vigilance. Their source must have been the "Natural History" of the classical Latin author, Pliny the Elder, an authority on animals throughout the Middle Ages. According to Pliny, the crane never fully sleeps. During the night, it stands on one leg while holding a rock in the other. Should the bird doze off, the rock drops and causes it to wake up so that it might pick up the stone and resume its posture of vigilance. Christian imagination loved this story about the crane and saw in it an emblem Christ's words: "Stay awake for you do not know the day or the hour" of the Lord's coming (Mt 25:13).

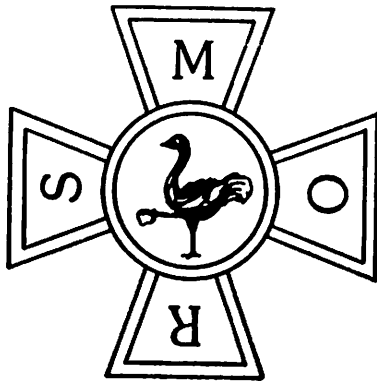
The monastery of Zirc fell victim in 1526 to the Turkish invasion, and over the next 150 years its whole region became part of such a devastated battlefield that no civilized life could survive. The Turks were finally defeated in 1686, and German monks from Heinrichau in Silesia (today Henryków in western Poland) began rebuilding Zirc began in 1700.



The monks of Heinrichau brought their emblem of a cross with the letters M-O-R-S written in its four arms. MORS means death in Latin, but in the crest it stood for the abbreviation of MORIMUNDUS, the Latin name of the abbey of Morimond from which most German Cistercian monasteries had been founded. This name was created in reference to the Saint Paul's idea of "dying to the world" (= "mori mundo") and living for Christ alone (see Rom 6:11).

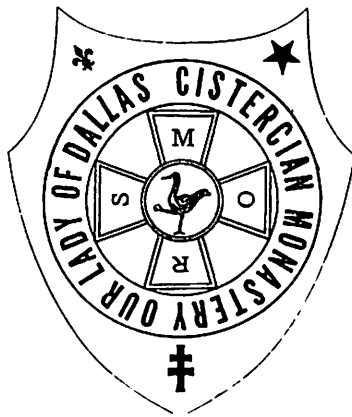
For about the next hundred years the abbots of Heinrichau were also abbots of Zirc, and the two emblems were used side by side. However, Heinrichau fell victim

to the greed of Prussia's famous King Frederick the Great, who suppressed the abbey and took away all its possessions in Silesia.



Zirc became independent just about the time all its monks were Hungarians. When the last (exiled) abbot of Henrichau died, the monks of Zirc elected their abbot from their own ranks. It was at this time that they decided to combine the two crests into one. The crane in the middle of a circle was surrounded by a cross with the word MORS inscribed in it.

We brought this crest to Dallas and added very little to it. It was placed in a shield and at the three corners further symbols were placed: the French lily, the double cross of St. Stephen of Hungary and the Lone Star of Texas.



The genealogy of our abbey could be summarized as follows. The Cistercians were founded in Cîteaux in 1098, France. Clairvaux was one of Cîteaux's earliest daughter abbeys erected by St. Bernard in 1113. Clairvaux, at the peak of its success, founded Zirc in 1181. Zirc perished in the Turkish wars but was revived by German Cistercians in 1700. When suppressed a second time in 1950, Zirc sent monks to America and made the Cistercian tradition reach Texas in 1955. Zirc was revived in 1989 and now the heritage of Clairvaux, destroyed by the French revolution is alive in both its Hungarian daughter and its American

granddaughter. Our emblem has carried on for nearly 40 years the memory of this nearly 900-year old saga and continues to set roots in Texas soil.

FIRST FRIDAYS OF THE SACRED HEART

**On the First Friday of each month, 7:30 PM
we will have mass at the Abbey**

Confession will be available beforehand from 6:30 to 7:30 PM.

The choir of U.D., "Collegium Cantorum," will sing at these masses.

The first such mass will be on September 2.

The practice of First Fridays is not new. Many Catholics have been raised with it. Its promotion fits well a monastery church with no parochial obligations.

The devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is generally thought to have originated in France in the 17th century upon the private revelations received by St. Mary Margaret Alacoque. This explanation is, however, somewhat narrow. Two places in St. John's gospel have impressed upon Christians the image of salvation springing forth from the heart of Jesus. The first one says that "from his heart rivers of living water will flow" (Jn 7:37). The second states that, upon his death, Jesus' heart was pierced and "immediately water and blood flowed out" (Jn 19:34).

With these biblical passages being meditated upon through the centuries, it was in the Cistercian monastery of Helfta in Germany that in the 13th century the first visionary of the Sacred Heart began to expand on this theme responding to the new needs and sensitivity of the times. St. Gertrude is venerated as a mystic whose special gift was to experience and to express the search for a new intimacy with Jesus in response to a growing feeling of alienation, the sad product of an ever more complicated, spectacularly effective, yet affectively empty world.

In the 17th century the new wave of devotion to the Sacred Heart mentioned above blossomed exactly because the experience of alienation also hurriedly progressed with the growth of industrialization. The liturgical feast of the Sacred Heart was placed in the week following Corpus Christi, the feast of the Eucharist. The practice of going to mass and communion on the first Friday of each month counteracted the neglect of sacramental life in the 19th century. In the first half of this century, the Jesuits were the main promoters of the devotion to the Sacred Heart all over Europe and America. Pope Pius XII published an encyclical in 1957 to promote this devotion as a means of expiation for the brutalities of our brave new world that has witnessed the greatest massacres of human history. In the center of this devotion is the realization that belonging to Christ is a matter of inner dispositions by which we join the attitudes of Jesus' Heart by a willing acceptance of life's manifold sufferings and by solidarity with the plight of sinful humanity.

It seems that we all need to increase our awareness of both sin and reconciliation. In this way the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus takes new importance as a tool of education in spiritual life. Since our culture has done a fairly thorough job of destroying the sense of sin and eliminating much meaning from forgiveness, we need to focus our eyes on the wounded Heart, lest we appear to imply that Jesus died for no purpose.

On First Fridays, there would also be a monthly opportunity for confessions before the evening mass. We hope this tool will be used for re-evangelizing ourselves about sin, expiation, forgiveness and the positive value found in the willing acceptance of suffering.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF FR. LOUIS LÉKAI



After thirteen years spent paralyzed and deprived of his ability to speak July 1, 1994, Fr. Louis Lékai, professor of history at the University of Dallas, a superb lecturer and scholar finished his earthly journey as he peacefully died at St. Paul's hospital in Dallas.

Fr. Louis was born in Budapest, Hungary, in 1916. He was a student of the Cistercian School in that city for eight years. He excelled in his studies and as a boy scout.

Religious and priestly life and the pursuit of learning attracted him early. Upon graduation, he joined the Cistercian Order. His studies of theology in Zirc were continued by studies of history. He obtained his Ph. D. at the age of 25. For two years he taught in the Cistercian Prep School of Eger. In 1947, as the first signs of religious persecution began, alongside with other monks, he was sent by his abbot to America with the task of establishing a home for those who

would later need to flee from Hungary. After unsuccessful efforts in Wisconsin and in Buffalo, N.Y., Fr. Louis was in the first group coming to Texas to help found the University of Dallas and our monastery.

He was the first Cistercian whom the University of Dallas elevated to the rank of full professor. Between 1972 and 1974 he taught part time at the Cistercian Preparatory School. With his studies of medieval and especially Cistercian history, Fr. Louis became a recognized scholar of international fame. His first comprehensive book on the subject, *The White Monks*, published in 1953, was highly acclaimed and was translated into French, German, Italian and Spanish. For twenty more years he worked on his definitive work on the same subject, *The Cistercians: Ideals and Reality*, published in 1977. In addition to the languages listed above it was translated into Dutch, Hungarian and Japanese. Today there is no specialist in medieval history who would not know of Louis Lékai.

In October of 1981, Fr. Louis was hit by a massive stroke which left him halfway paralyzed and unable to speak, read or write. He never regained his ability to communicate. A partial recovery made him only more aware of his plight. He spent thirteen years in a nursing home in Dallas, first struggling to accept his condition, then developing a new serenity of acceptance and prayerful resignation. When the University of Dallas honored him by a *Festschrift*, a memorial volume of scholarly articles (*Studiosorum Speculum* meaning "The Model of Scholars"), he looked at this tribute for less than five minutes and signaled that for him such matters had lost meaning. Due to infections on his paralyzed leg, he underwent his last ordeal on June 15, 1994, when his left leg was amputated. For a short while he began feeling better but unexpectedly suffered a heart attack. On July 1 he died in great peace. With Bishop Tschoepe presiding, Bishop Grahmann and the Cistercian Fathers concelebrated at his funeral. Fr. Peter Verhalen gave the eulogy. Another memorial mass is planned for Fr. Louis in the chapel of the Incarnation at UD on Thursday, Sep 8, at 4 PM. On Sunday, Sep 11, The choir of UD will dedicate their singing at the evening mass to Fr. Louis' memory (5 PM).

I quote from the announcement sent to all Cistercian and Trappist monasteries of monks and nuns: "united to the agony of Christ for thirteen years, Fr. Louis has taught us about monastic life more eloquently and effectively than through all his famous scholarly books and academic teaching." In truth, both parts of his life, his teaching and his suffering, belonged to the same vocation. He authored five books and about sixty scholarly articles.

NEWS OF THE COMMUNITY

Visitation and Abbatial Election

In the last days of February, the Abbot General of our Order, Fr. Polycarp Zakar, held the official visitation of the Abbey. According to our Constitutions, such visitations are to be held in our Abbey every third year. The canonical visitation is an institution established by the Cistercians in the 12th century and has been taken over by many other religious orders. Its purpose is to check on the community's life, discipline, finances, problems and needs. Each member has the right to speak with the visiting abbot about his personal complaints or proposals. At the end of the

visitation, the visiting abbot leaves behind a written document in which he exhorts, rectifies and admonishes the community as he sees fit.

Since the abbot's six-year term was about to run out, on March 3, 1994 an abbatial election took place in the monastery. Abbot Denis was re-elected for a new term of six years. He in turn appointed the new officials of the monastery. Fr. Peter became the prior and Fr. Henry the subprior. Fr. Bernard was confirmed in his office as headmaster. The Abbot's Council was newly formed with members Frs. Peter, Henry, Bernard, David, Gregory and Timothy.

Golden Jubilees

This summer three priests of our Abbey, Frs Christopher, George and Benedict celebrated their 50th anniversary of ordination. At their request, Fr. Chris and Fr. George held their Golden Jubilee without any publicity at the morning conventual mass of May 18, the day of their ordination. Fr. Benedict holds his jubilee in Hungary on August 21. We ask for your prayers.

Fr. Gilbert's Return to Hungary

In March, Fr. Gilbert Hardy, a member of the community in Dallas since 1961, has asked to be allowed to return permanently to Hungary. Fr. Gilbert taught philosophy at the UD for 30 years. His decision was made in view of the need of the Hungarian Cistercians for a professor of philosophy to teach their young recruits. His departure to Hungary is scheduled for August 16.

Other Hungarian Ties: Visits and Publication

After Christmas two Cistercians from Hungary spent two weeks in our monastery. They wanted to see both our school's organization and the style of our community's life. Meanwhile our Abbey is trying to help the struggles of the Church in Hungary by providing books on spirituality and theology. Fr. Roch's *Christology*, published by Ignatius Press in 1992, will appear in Hungarian translation within a year. By Christmas of 1994, Abbot Denis' newly written Introduction to the Books of the New Testament is scheduled for publication. Also by the end of the year, a volume of reflections and meditations used in the last three years by the Hungarian program of the Vatican Radio will be published. We have also received requests for a Hungarian translation of the religion textbooks of the Cistercian Prep School, written for each grade over the past twenty years by our staff.

Changes in Membership

On March 30, to our regret but with our understanding and full spiritual support, Br. Edmund left the monastic life. He finished his degree at UD and moved to Austin where he is employed and plans to begin graduate studies. In August, a new candidate, Jonathan Wheat, joined the monastery. Jonathan will live as a postulant in the Abbey for the Fall Semester and plans to begin his novitiate after Christmas.

Assignments Abroad

Fr. Benedict Monostori who spent a year in Hungary, assisting at the rebirth of the Cistercian school in Pécs is scheduled to return to Dallas by the end of August. A retired professor of Physics of the University of Dallas, Fr. Benedict participated in the activities of the science department in Pécs and taught classes of religion.

Fr. James Lehrberger served the past year as professor of philosophy and chaplain at the UD campus in Rome. He will be back for another year in Rome, now the newly

acquired and dedicated UD facility near Castelgandolfo, the Pope's summer residence.

In 1994-95 Brother Paul McCormick will obtain his M.A. in theology. In the Fall of 1995 he is scheduled to begin post-graduate theological studies in Rome at the pontifical university, *Gregoriana*.

ATTITUDES TOWARD THE FUTURE

Our community has aged a year and has lost three members: one to death, another to a call back to Hungary, a third to his need to return to the world. The Cistercian Prep School gained a new Cistercian Form Master in the person of Fr. Mark. For the first time in 10 years the headmaster does not need to serve also as Form Master.

We recommend to your prayers Jonathan Wheat who hopes to be able to persevere in a vocation he perceives as real. Just as much prayer is needed for those vocations that are coming about and especially for those young men with a vocation but handicapped by lack of support from their families, lack of encouragement by friends, lack of courage, lack of trust in the power of grace.

Before instituting the Eucharist, on the night he was betrayed, Jesus told the Twelve who included his betrayer and were fully engaged in rivalry: "You are the ones who persevered with me in my temptations. But, on my part, I will make you partake of my kingdom where you will eat and drink at my table" (Lk 22:28-29). Our privilege is to be part of both of the temptations and the table fellowship of Jesus.

Office of the Abbot
Cistercian Abbey Our Lady of Dallas
One Cistercian Road
Irving, Texas 75039

