



A Letter From The Abbey

Cistercian Abbey

August 1998

Our Lady of Dallas



Pope's letter addresses Cistercian family at its 900th anniversary

The past twelve months have been very busy in the world wide Cistercian family. Among Cistercians the term "Cistercian Family" became a world-wide buzz

word in reference to the various religious communities that stem from Cîteaux. It was in honor of the 900th anniversary of the foundation of Cîteaux that all this activity came about.

At this occasion the Pope addressed an Apostolic Letter to all Cistercians in the world, exhorting them to faithful adherence to their spiritual heritage and sharing it with all people. Excerpts of this letter follow.

This year when the Abbey of Cîteaux celebrates with devotion the nine hundredth year of its foundation, I happily join in the joy and thanksgiving of the great Cistercian Family which at this occasion wants to draw from the sources of its founding charism in order to finding there the promise of a new vitality. (...)

At the arrival of the third millennium, as the whole Church prepares itself for the Great Jubilee, we commemorate the prophetic work of St. Robert of Molesme and his companions who in 1098 established the "novum monasterium" by responding to an ardent desire "to follow henceforth more closely and more perfectly the Rule of the blessed Benedict" (Exordium Parvum) which they have re-read in the light of earlier spiritual tradition, and found in it an enlightenment of the signs of their time. By living the monastic quest with greater authenticity, they went out to find the internal harmony necessary for the search of God in humility, obedience and good zeal. (...)

The Cistercian reform profoundly marks the renewal of the liturgy by simplifying and unifying it. Today, monks and nuns celebrating in commu-

nity in a style marked by grandeur and simplicity, give a splendid expression to their vocation to praise God and to intercede for the Church and for the whole world by joining in prayer with all Christians. (...)

Dear Brothers and Sisters, heirs of the Cistercian patrimony, I invite you to remain ardent and enthusiastic witnesses of the search of God through the celebration of the liturgy, the peak and source of your monastic life, through lectio divina, this continuous listening and meditation of the Word of God, received in humility and joy, as well as by applying yourselves frequently to personal prayer as your Father, Saint Benedict invites you to. There you will find an inexhaustible source of internal peace which you will desire to share with all.

The desire of a new life in following Christ which characterizes Cîteaux at its origin remains an intuition of great actuality. In fact, the Rule offers to each person a straight path of evangelical perfection, due to its discretion and its equilibrium between the different traditional monastic practices. (...)

Returning today, after nine centuries of history beset by vicissitudes, to its primitive inspiration, the Cistercian family recognizes its identity in the founding grace of its first Fathers. It also discovers the legitimate diversity of its traditions which constitute richness for all and express the vitality of the original charism; the Church sees in this diversity the work of the one and same Spirit, working from the identity of a single gift.

At this celebration of the founding of Cîteaux I encourage vividly the communities that constitute the great Cistercian family to enter together into the new millennium in truthful communion with each other, in mutual trust and in the respect of the traditions transmitted by history. May this anniversary of the "New Monastery" which obtained in the Church and the world such a great radiance, be for all of them a reminder of their common origin and their belonging to each other as well as the symbol of the unity which always remains a reality both to be received and to be formed.

All Cistercians gather in Cîteaux



'Praying Monk' by Fr. Damian

In the center of the celebrations of 900 years of Cistercian life stood a major gathering of about 800 monks and nuns in **Cîteaux**, France where Cistercian life began in the year of 1098. The traditional date of the foundation, March 21, was chosen as the high point of the festivities.

The program began on March 17 with a gathering called a "**synaxis**," an informal and special gathering of prayer, exchange and reflection over the significance of 900 years of Cistercian history and tradition. After days of conferences and discussions about the papal letter a document was released, urging all Cistercians to unite in their effort of strengthening the presence of the Cistercian charisma in today's world and find unity of spirit and work among the branches of the Cistercian family. The "synaxis" issued a final document, calling to a new beginning in relationships among the various groups of Cistercian monks and nuns, most importantly the "Cistercians of the Strict Observance" (Trappists) and the "Cistercian Order" to which Our Lady of Dallas also belongs. The text of this declaration was formulated in French but read also in English and Spanish at the celebration. It was signed by all participants, monks and nuns, superiors and simple members alike following no particular order to demonstrate its unofficial character. Its entire text is reproduced here.

To the Brothers and Sisters of the Cistercian Family by the members of the Synaxis in Cîteaux, March 17-19, 1998

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

On the occasion of the celebration of the ninth centenary of Cîteaux, the mother of us all, we have come together in this holy place, at the invitation of the two Abbots General, in the hope of finding the means of moving towards that unanimity and charity which our founders so ardently desired.

These have been happy days; a high level of mutual acceptance has made it possible an open

dialogue between brothers and sisters in which we have experienced that diversity need not divide us.

Our reflections were shaped by the public reading of the letter addressed to all members of the Cistercian Family by Pope John Paul II. We are greatly encouraged by his profound understanding of our Cistercian way and by the clarity with which he sets before us the challenges of our time.

The holy Father reminds us that our life has a prophetic character. We are called to be "ardent and enthusiastic witnesses of the search for God." Our communities are to be "centers of light for the Church and for the world, hospitable homes for all who seek God."

We recognize, moreover, that it is together that we shall fulfill this role: "in true communion, in mutual confidence and in the respect of the traditions inherited from history." It is together that we must re-read the Rule of Saint Benedict and our Cistercian sources in the light of the signs of the times.

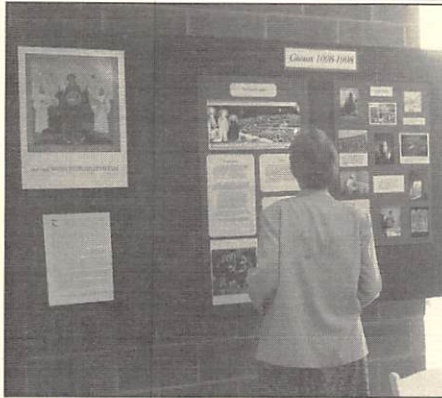
The communion we seek is not a matter of juridical union or uniformity of observances. It derives from a common appreciation of the gift of a Cistercian vocation, from a profound respect for the integrity of different expressions of the Cistercian charism, and from a desire to grow in mutual affection and friendship. It is a unity constantly to be received with gratitude and constantly to be built in humility and truth.

It is our hope that the grace of the Synaxis will find an echo in the hearts of all our sisters and brothers, including the lay associates. We call each of our communities to do what is possible at every all level to ensure the growth of communication, dialogue and collaboration between the different members of the Cistercian family. In particular, we ask our Superiors General to form a commission with the mandate of continuing the work of this Synaxis and the promotion of everything that advances our communion.

It has been our privilege to participate in this first Synaxis of the Cistercian family. In particular, we have rejoiced to have been associated with the opening of the renovated church at Cîteaux. We make our own today the words Dom Sighard Kleiner spoke at the dedication of this church in 1969: "May the inauguration of the new church at Cîteaux waken our minds to seek out new ways of bringing into effect the intentions of the Charter of Charity and of giving new life to the spirit of our holy Founders.

And may God who has begun this good work bring it to completion on the day of Christ Jesus.

Jubilee celebrations at home and abroad



Commemorative exhibit celebrating 900 years of Cistercian history and the 40 year past of Our Lady of Dallas. It will remain on display in the Cistercian Prep School library during the fall semester.

On March 21, the Abbey of Our Lady of Dallas has also held a major celebration, commemo-

rating the 900th anniversary of the Order with the 40th anniversary of the first Cistercian foundation in Texas. It was on February 9, 1958 that the first wing of the Abbey opened its doors and Cistercian life official began at its present location. The celebration filled the Abbey Church to capacity: according to the count of the caterer 500 people took part at the reception which followed.

From among the religious of the metroplex the largest number of participants came from the **Sisters of St. Mary of Namur** whose support and friendship has been largely responsible for the arrival of the Cistercians in Texas and the foundation of the University of Dallas that followed. Many came in representation of the University, including its President,

Msgr. Milam Joseph. "In the past 40 years every member of the Abbey was a teacher or a student or both at UD" -- Abbot Denis has said in his sermon.

Other celebrations commemorating 900 years of Cistercian history took place all over the world. In February, all Cistercian superiors of the US and Canada convened in the **Abbey of Gethsemani**, in April the German speaking Cistercians had a convention in **St. Pölten, Austria**, in June the Polish Cistercians organized a convention in **Krakow**. The commemorative events are not all over as yet. The French Government a program for scholars of Cistercian history in **Dijon, France** and in **Oviedo, Spain** a similar project is sponsored by state authorities.

NEWS FROM THE MONASTERY...

➔ The monastery published a commemorative volume under the title **Cistercians in Texas** in honor of this year's double jubilee. The volume contains articles about Cistercian history and spirituality. To current students, parents and alumni the volume has been distributed by mail. More copies are sold for a prize of \$15.00. Call the monastery's office (972-438-2044) or the Office of the School (972-438-4956).

➔ On March 8, the two novices of the Abbey, Br. Patrick Griffin and Br. Gabriel Wagner pronounced their first vows for three years. Both are graduate students of theology and are expected to conclude their studies for the priesthood in 2001.

➔ One major event of the Spring Semester that mobilized many of our supporters was a medical emergency involving **Fr. Moses**. Less than two years after repatriating to Hungary, in January of this year, Fr. Moses was diagnosed with cancer behind his right eye. He came to Dallas than to Houston where they ended up removing his eye. Provided with a prosthesis Fr. Moses returned to Hungary and resumed his ministry. We are grateful to all who helped him in any way, including the many prayers said on his behalf.

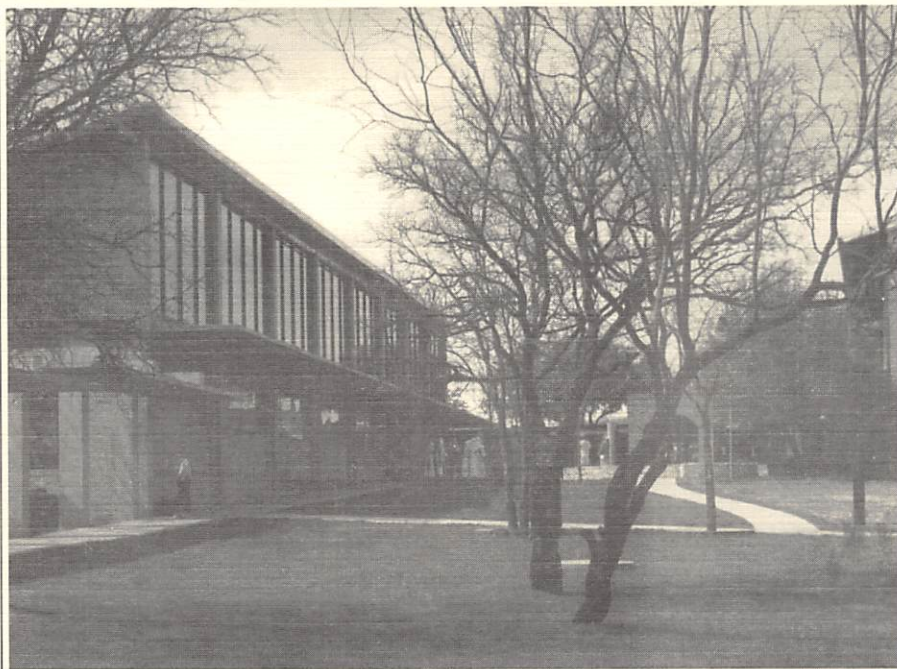
➔ In many other ways we stayed in touch with the Cistercians in Hungary. Once again, Fr. Roch went to Zirc to teach theology in summer school. Abbot Denis, Fr. Julius and Fr. Bernard had a chance to visit briefly the monastery of Zirc. Fr. Peter and Fr. Paul together with Brs. Patrick and Gabriel made a vacation trip while the heat index was reaching 114 degrees in Dallas they stayed in the cool of Colorado for 10 days.

➔ Every First Friday of the school year (beginning on September 4) the Community's Mass at the Abbey will be at 7:30 PM. starting in October the **Collegium Cantorum** of the University of Dallas plans to participate.

➔ September 27, Sunday, 7:30 PM. Annual Mass of the Abbey honoring the Freshmen of the **University of Dallas** with reception following.

➔ On November 2, All Souls' Day, Solemn Requiem Mass for deceased members, relatives and friends. The Collegium Cantorum will present Anerio's Requiem Mass. We will send you a reminder, asking that you us the names of those deceased persons you especially wish us to remember at this year's celebration.

CPS Library dedicated; new art center opened



This spring has marked major change in the physical facilities of the Cistercian Prep School. A new library (shown here) and an art center were dedicated in March and, during the summer months, the school's oldest building, the Middle School, has undergone major renovation. As a result the School obtained a new lunchroom, new administrative offices and upgraded its old facilities to recent legal standards by providing access for the disabled, including an elevator.

photo courtesy of Jim Reisch

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