



LETTER FROM THE ABBOT

Dear Friend of the Cistercian Abbey:

At this time of the year many of you want to visit with us, but distance or lack of time make it hardly possible. And we would like to visit with all of you, but we too are restricted: we do not have the space or time to tell you everything we would like.

This common need has suggested the idea of adding a Christmas letter to the traditional Christmas card.

A Word from our "Patron":

The most memorable Cistercian—an outstanding spiritual Father on earth and now our Patron in heaven—St. Bernard of Clairvaux was especially devoted to the feast of Christmas. His vocation had much to do with Christmas. While still a child, he went with his parents to midnight mass, and waiting once for the mass to begin, he fell asleep. In his dream he saw himself present at the manger of Bethlehem in the company of Mary and Joseph, the angels, and the shepherds, all gazing upon the Holy Infant. For the rest of his life he was famous for his moving Christmas sermons, about a dozen of which have survived.

We would like you to have a taste of St. Bernard's Christmas devotion, especially because the year 1990 is dedicated to the 900th anniversary of Bernard's birth. The following is a selection from a sermon he preached to his fellow monks on the Vigil of Christmas sometime around the year 1140. The passage is a masterful explanation of what the triple name of the newborn Savior means for us: Jesus, Christ, Son of God

"Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is Born in Bethlehem!"

You who are lying stretched out in the dust, awake to new life and start your song of praise. Look! The Lord is coming to save you. He comes with salvation, He comes with ointments, He comes with glory. For "Jesus" means savior, "Christ" means anointed, and the "Son of God" certainly brings glory.

Happy the person who tastes the fruit of salvation, then feels attracted and is drawn by the odor of the Anointed One, and runs quickly to him to see his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father!

If you felt you were lost, sigh with relief: Jesus came to find and save what was lost. If you felt mortally sick, receive new health: Christ came to anoint your heart with the oil of his mercy. If your heart aspires to grand things, rejoice: the Son of God descends to you to make you fellow heirs of his kingdom. Yes, that is what I should say: save me, Lord, and I will be saved; heal me, and I will be healthy

again; glorify me, and I will be glorious!

These three things are meant when I hear the refrain today, "Jesus Christ, the Son of God is born." For why else was he called Jesus, if not "because he will bring salvation to his people" (Matt. 1:21)? And why did he want to be called Christ, which means "Anointed," if not with his ointment to disburden you of your yoke? Why did the Son of God become man if not to turn us into God's sons?

Can anything resist his will? If Jesus acquits, who will condemn? If Christ heals, who will be able to wound? If the Son of God exalts, will anyone be able to humiliate us again?

Personal News

Fr. Damian has recovered remarkably well from his accident last March when he broke his pelvis. Although he still uses a cane, he is moving around rather comfortably and is again spending much of his time in his studio. In the lobby of the monastery he has exhibited three new sculptures that are unique in many ways. They are made of European green jade that he obtained in Austria.

The state of Fr. Louis has not changed substantially; only the Labouré Center, where he is being cared for, was sold by the Daughters of Charity and is now under independent management. The new name of the facility is *Professional Care Center*. Each Saturday we are still able to offer a mass in his room. He rejoiced visibly when he saw his book (*Cistercians: Ideal and Reality*) appear in Japanese. The book was originally published in English by Kent State University Press and has been previously translated into Dutch and Spanish. A second printing in English is planned for May. Besides German, French and Italian translations under way, a Hungarian translation prepared by four of us (Frs. Placid, Roch, Julius and myself) will appear this year.

Upon his retirement last May

from the University of Dallas, Fr. Benedict was honored for his long-standing service both as professor of Physics and, for many years, as chairman of the Physics Department. Fr. Benedict continues to teach part-time at UD.

At his parish in Grapevine Fr. Balthasar celebrated in June the 40th anniversary of his ordination and first mass. The anniversary mass, concelebrated with the members of the Abbey, was followed by a very warm, emotion-filled feast, during which the mayor of Grapevine handed over to Fr. "B" a document naming him an honored citizen of the town.

Speaking of round numbers: Fr. Christopher, our Prior, has marked half a century as a member of the Order when he celebrated on November 12 the patron saint assigned to him when first taking the habit.

The end of May has seen a small milestone in the Prep school's history: Fr. Peter, alumnus of the Prep School (Class '73), led his own form, Class '89, to graduation, and was immediately "recycled" to become Form Master of the new First Form, Class '97.

Fr. Gregory, his novice mate, is now the Form Master of the cur-

rent seniors, Class '90. With 37 members his class is (and will be for some time) the largest graduating class at CPS.

During the summer Fr. Timothy temporarily left behind the realms of science and spent two months in Trois Rivières, Quebec, where studied French "by total immersion."

There are a number of other items from the world of Academia. Fr. Gilbert's book, *The Monastic Quest and Interreligious Dialogue* has found an enthusiastic editor and will be published by the beginning of the summer.

Having published two new issues of *Claudel Studies*, Fr. Moses has turned his interest toward the role and interpretation of Christopher Columbus in the works of Paul Claudel. This subject obtains special importance as the Columbus year of 1992 approaches. This great Catholic French writer's deep interest in America is still relatively little known and in need of research.

While teaching full time in the Department of Philosophy, Fr. James has also been busy delivering lectures and preparing papers: one in September at the American Political Science Association meeting in Atlanta, another in November at UD, and a third will be read in March at the APSA Convention in Fort Worth.

Fr. Robert also is teaching full time at UD and this year is offering a course in his area of special interest, the American novel. Both of our members with family in San Francisco were relieved to hear that no relatives suffered any injury or property damage during the earthquake.

Fr. Roch has prepared for pub-

lication a study on the two most important figures of the early Church, Peter and Paul. The book was undertaken in the form of an ecumenical dialogue with Professor William Farmer of the Perkins School of theology at SMU. As the students of the Prep School know, Fr. Roch has also undergone surgery to remove a small nodule from his vocal chords. The biopsy revealed no malignancy whatsoever. However, Fr. Roch will remain somewhat impeded in the use of his voice for awhile.

Br. Mark has registered for his last undergraduate semester: he will graduate with a major in philosophy and a minor in mathematics at the end of his Spring Semester. He will then start his direct preparation for the priesthood by entering a graduate program in theology next Fall.

News of the Community

August 15-18, our Abbey held its annual retreat with Benedictine Abbot Matthew Leavy, from St Anselm's Abbey in Manchester, New Hampshire, as the retreat master.

On October 2, the freshmen of the University of Dallas were invited to the Abbey for a Sunday evening mass followed by a reception. The event was meant to create a new occasion for building ties between UD students and the Monastery.

During the summer an elevator was installed near the lobby of the Monastery. The construction has given us a chance to create a new façade for our main entrance and to move the life-size statue of

St. Bernard to front of the building. To finish the project, we still plan to decorate the space above the statue with the Abbey's emblem made of terrazzo.

Putting **St. Bernard** on a pedestal is only part of our preparations for the jubilee year mentioned above. The theme of the Book Fair in the Cistercian Prep School will be the St. Bernard Jubilee. An exhibit on his life and works is in preparation. At about the same time, in February and March, four lectures on the doctrine and influence will be sponsored by the Institute of Contemplative Studies at the University of Dallas. They will be given by Abbot Denis, Fr. Roch, Dr. Sommerfeldt and Dr. Stephen Maddux.

Cistercians in Hungary

As one of many fruits of the spectacular changes taking place in Eastern Europe (According to us, the correct expression is "Central Europe.") our "Mother Abbey," the Abbey of Zirc in Hungary, has come to life again. The once populous community has been slowly dying out since its suppression in 1950. While the admission of new members continued until 1958 in spite of government prohibition, the membership has dwindled over the last 30 years down to about 60 "survivors." (The community numbered about 240 members in 1950.)

By now the State has revoked its laws prohibiting the existence of religious orders and has declared the matter a "private affair of the Catholic Church." One wing of the ancient Abbey has already been returned to us. On September 21, 1989, four young novices (ranging in age from 18 to 25) took the habit in the

abbatial Church and began their novitiate. On October 11, the "survivors" held their first official abbatial chapter in 40 years. It was presided over by both the Abbot General Polycarp Zakar, himself a member of Zirc, and the Abbot of Zirc, Charles Kerökes. Though Abbot Charles first became the Abbot of the community outside Hungarian law, the government has acknowledged his appointment during the past year.

The community in Hungary has also started taking back into possession some of its parishes and facilities. Most importantly, the Cistercian parish of St. Emery in Budapest has been recovered. But only about 15 of Cistercians in Hungary are under 65; they must be patient in their work of resurrecting what has been destroyed by 40 years of persecution. According to a recent count, almost one-fourth of the membership was jailed or drummed-up charges in the 50's and the 60's.

Hopes and Prayers

As we celebrate Christmas, our hopes and prayers are divided between the needs of the Hungarian Cistercians, trying to resurrect their life and institutions, and our own concerns, our School, our students, our Abbey and our future.

Join us this Christmas in prayer for renewed dedication, enlightened vision, increased generosity in our hearts—and for the birth of more vocations to the priesthood and religious life in our Abbey and in our society at large.

May the Prince of Peace bless you with his holiday gifts in abundance!