



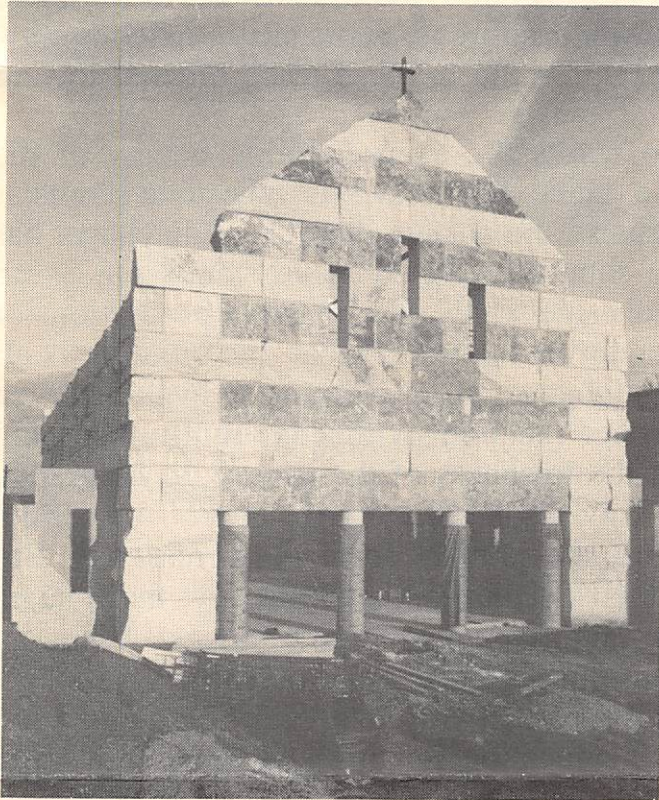
LETTER FROM THE ABBOT

December 8, 1991

Abbot Denis Farkasfalvy O.Cist.

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

Although the Christmas card included may carry greetings from us all at the Abbey, I would like to attach a few words from an ancient Cistercian text written for this feast by St. Bernard. It tells us why we can never get tired of celebrating the Christmas mystery. These words explain the same idea which the custom of setting up Christmas trees, an evergreen plant in the middle of winter, also intimates: the birth of Christ is always a novelty, new and renewing.



This mystery is always new, for it never ceases to renew our minds. It cannot become ancient, for it never stops bringing new fruits and remains unfading. This is the meaning of what we read, "God does not allow his Holy One to experience decay" (cf. Acts 13:35). The new man born today is not subject to aging and can therefore offer true renewal of life even if our bones have already grown old with age. This is why we fittingly announce today: "Jesus Christ, the son of God is born - not was born but is born - today in Bethlehem." Just as it can be said that he is, in some true sense, daily sacrificed, as long as we announce his death, similarly he is being born each time we celebrate with faith

the event of his birth. And as he is born we see God's majesty now revealed within ourselves - - but not yet in itself. Yes, indeed his majesty is revealed in humility, strength in weakness, God in man.

We wish you as to all members of our Cistercian Family the renewing and rejuvenating grace of Christmas. May God reveal to you on the feast of his birth, how much he loves us, with how much dignity we are endowed through this love, how much value has been added to our life since he chose to unite himself once and forever with our human nature. May each day of your life be inserted into his divine life once and forever.

NEWS ABOUT THE ABBEY

The Chapel

Ever since the middle of July we have been livin amid the growing physical disorder, but also under the profound influence of a slowly but surely unfolding project of construction, the Chapel.

Still in the summer, the concrete foundation of piers and columns was built. Then came a "quantum leap" - the erection of the stone walls. By now, the façade is practically complete, only the three main doors and the portico in front of the doors are missing. Right after Thanksgiving the beams of the roof were hoisted above the walls. Now one can already sense the dimensions of the inner space. Upon the peak of the façade a newly cast bronze cross sits in quiet dignity, as if announcing with serenity that "all things are in place when ordered toward one main purpose."

It is rather difficult to put into words the overwhelming beauty of the stones which dominate the building as a whole. Each block of limestone stands as a statement expressing stability, seriousness and austere humility. The chapel has become for us a parable of what we should be. Each stone stands out as an individual, yet fully integrated into a cohesive whole. The massive proportions of each block seem to remind us of the enduring nature of what this building is all about: God's truth and love. As daylight changes from morning to evening, even from season to season, the stones reflect the light with continually changing sensitivity. In the morning they mirror the freshness of the sunrise, at noon they can be dazzling white, in the evening they display the orange hue of the setting sun. At times they reflect in serious gray the quiet mood of an overcast sky. But they are never trivial, and they retain their uncompromising identity: these huge, unmovable boulders always project importance and permanence. What an extraordinary atmosphere of "continuous education" has been created here for all of us! Thanks, and again thanks to all of you who have been our pupils and companions in one single enterprise of education for thirty years! Friends and Brothers, the learning goes on!

Community News

Canonical Visitation

During the fall semester the Abbey's most memorable event was its **canonical visitation** by Abbot Charles Kerekes of Zirc, Hungary. According to our Order's ancient customs as well as the currently valid law of the Church, each monastery is to be visited every third year by the Abbot of another Abbey, usually the Abbey responsible for its foundation. During the past thirty years, our founding Abbey in Hungary had been under suppression so that the Abbot General of the Order had to carry out this task. For the first time in our history,

the visitation was held this year by the Abbot of our mother monastery. Abbot Charles spent with us the last two weeks of October. According to his wish we did not publicize his visit but allowed him spend all his time on the job for which he had come.

During the visitation, he spoke to us in community, then met with each one of us in private. Finally, he left a list of "commendations and recommendations." This list, traditionally called the "Visitation Charter" ("Charta Visitationis") is the official record of the fact that our Order has taken another look at our Abbey and left a document of approval and encouragement for our community.

Abbot Charles has impressed us as a very experienced and prudent man. He is 73 years old. During the years of Communism, he had a rather tough life. His original training was in ancient languages (Ph.D. in Latin and Greek), but for almost 20 years he had to teach Russian in elementary schools. Later he became professor in a regional seminary and was instrumental in establishing a National Academy of Theology for lay volunteers teaching religion. In 1983, when the last regularly elected abbot of our mother abbey, Abbot Wendelin, died, he was appointed by the Holy See to be his successor and became the religious superior of the Cistercians scattered in Hungary. As the Communist regime collapsed, it was under his leadership that the community began to reorganize, and to admit new candidates.

Novitiate

From the three novices who took the habit, the two older ones, Br. Stephen (29) and Br. Francis (30) have left the Abbey. In fact, Br. Stephen has left us less than two weeks after he took the habit, while Br. Francis has come to the same conclusion a few weeks ago, in the middle of November. For the time being, the youngest of the original three Br. Edmund (21) is our only novice, - for the time being. This last phrase is not said with any pessimism. We pray and hope that before long another or others may join him. It was not always easy to deal with the changes, yet both candidates who left did so with gratitude and positive feelings. We felt the guidance of Providence many times during the last four months.

Other Personal News

Next year the actual membership of the Abbey is expected to go up in any case. **Fr. Julius** will finish his years of service in Rome to join the community of the Abbey as well as the Faculty of the Cistercian Prep School. He will be available to resume teaching and to serve as Form Master next Fall. Similarly, **Frs. Gilbert and Robert**, currently at the Rome Campus of the University of Dallas are expected to return in the summer.

For a "blitz" appearance in Dallas we had **Fr. Ralph** visiting here for almost a week. He led a workshop in Gregorian chant, sponsored by the University of Dallas. The program closed with a solemn Gregorian Mass on All Souls' Day.

Pastoral Assignments

I have been asked several times in recent months about the participation of our Abbey in pastoral ministry. Probably many of you would be interested in these acts. As in the past several years, two of our members, have full-time pastoral assignments. **Fr. Balthasar** is the pastor of St. Francis Church in Grapevine and **Fr. Melchior** is chaplain at Carswell Airforce Base in Ft. Worth. Others who do part-time pastoral work include **Fr. George** (Mt. St. Michael in Dallas), **Fr. Benedict** (Holy Family Convent in Grand Prairies), **Fr. Aloysius** (St. Edward's in Dallas), **Fr. Pascal** (St. Maria Goretti Church in Arlington), **Fr. Matthew** (Holy Family in Irving) and **Fr. James** (Naval Air Station in Grand Prairie). **Fr. Peter** and myself alternate in saying one weekday evening mass at the Chapel of the Incarnation at U.D. In addition, the Abbey sponsors a mass in Hungarian on the last Sunday of each month at 10:15 AM. All these assignments do not impede that 12-14 of us from remaining available to concelebrate at a Gregorian mass each Sunday at 9 AM in the Abbey. (We can hardly wait to do it in the new Chapel!)

Evenings of Recollection

Last year we adopted a plan of three yearly evenings of recollection. On the eve of the first Sunday of Advent we again spent the evening hours in silence and prayer before the Blessed Sacrament exposed in the Chapel. We will do the same on the eve of the First Sunday in Lent.

On the last night of the year, December 31, 1991, we will have the Blessed Sacrament exposed from 9 PM through midnight for optional gatherings of adoration. We will keep the Abbey open on this night for all those who would like to participate, even if only for half an hour. Besides our many common and personal needs, we try to focus during these evenings on praying for priestly and religious vocations.

We learn from the Bible that just a few people praying make a great deal of difference in God's eyes. This insight is, in fact, basic to all religious life since it is lived by a few for the sake of the many.

**Let us remain
united in prayer and hope
during the holy season of Christmas.
HAPPY NEW YEAR!**