

A LETTER FROM THE ABBEY

Christmas, 1995

Twelve Paradoxes for Christmas

The idea of looking at paradoxes came from "Reflections," the literary magazine of the Cistercian Prep School. As it invited faculty and the students to gather examples for the paradoxes that pervade our lives, I knew that I would write about the paradoxes of Christmas: cards, sermons, stories, and theological statements about Christmas abound in paradoxes.

They make you reflect on Christmas as one great paradox about God and Man, Time and Eternity, Humility and Exaltation, Virginity and Birth, even Word that announces itself as the most profound Silence. As food for thought, here I offer you twelve Christmas paradoxes for the Twelve Days of Christmas:

1) The Word of God became an Infant who could not speak

2) God gave his riches by sharing our poverty

3) God became Man so that Man may become God

4) Mary was confirmed in her perpetual virginity as she became the mother of a divine Child - and of every human being to be redeemed.

5) In the darkest night the brightest of lights has shined.

6) God chose to come to a dwelling of animals so that we may join the home of angels.

7) God took on our humanity in order to make us share in his deity.

8) The peace of Christ brought the sword on the earth.



Madonna with the Child
by Andrea della Robbia

- 9) The eternal life of God began to exist in time.
- 10) The silent night of Christmas is God's eloquence on earth
- 11) The one who becomes like a child is the greatest in God's kingdom.
- 12) He who loses his life will find it.

News About the Community

Increased Ranks

By New Year's Day each category of the community will increase. On Sunday, December 31, during Vespers, two candidates, George Healy and Richard Farr, will receive the white habit of the novices. Both participated in a retreat at the Abbey last August. Richard is from Garland. He spent the Fall semester in the Abbey as a postulant, attending the University of Dallas. George is from Miami, Florida.

On Monday, January 1, after the gospel of the 9 o'clock mass, Br. William Wheat, who has been a novice since last January, will take his first vows for three years. At the same time, Br. Paul McCormick, who took his first vows in January of 1993, will renew his vows.

In January, 1996, Br. William begins studying philosophy and theology at the University of Dallas. Br. Paul will be back in Rome; his study program there will last until June, 1997. According to our present plans, he will be ordained to the priesthood in 1997.

The novitiate is a year of formation of one year. In our monastery, the novices are taught a set of courses by various members of the community. These introduce them to the spirituality and history of the Order and assist them in developing their prayer life. The study plan includes presently the following courses: Liturgy (Fr. David), Spiritual Theology (Fr. Roch), St. Benedict's Rule (Fr. Peter) History of the Order (Fr. Julius), Psalms (Fr. Denis), and Gregorian Chant (Fr. Henry).

Events of the Fall Semester

August 31 through September 9, Abbot Denis and Fr. Peter represented the Abbey Our Lady of Dallas at the General Chapter of the Cistercian Order. The Chapter took place in Rocca di Papa, a town on the outskirts of Rome, overlooking Lago di Albano, just across from the papal summer residence of Castelgandolfo. Sixty-four monks and fifteen nuns participated. The Chapter first listened to and discussed reports about each group of monasteries. On September 4, a new Abbot General was elected in the person of Mauro Esteva, the abbot of Poblet in Spain. Abbot Mauro was born in 1933 and was ordained a priest in 1967. He was elected abbot of Poblet in 1972. On the next day, September 4, a new Procurator General was elected in the person of Fr. Meinrad Toman, a monk of Heiligenkreuz in Austria. The role of the Procurator General is to assure communication between each monastery and the Holy See. He is also the vicar or substitute

of the Abbot General whenever the Abbot General is impeded. Fr. Meinrad is 38 years old and is in charge of the daily life of the eight students who reside in the Order's Generalate in Rome. The General Chapter approved the revised ritual of the Order and brought to conclusion the legislation that includes the superiors of the Cistercian Nuns in the administration of the Order.

During the fall, three major events took place in the Abbey Church. On October 9, students and faculty of the University of Dallas convened for a mass and reception honoring the Freshmen. This year's attendance was so far the largest. An estimated crowd of more than 300 participants filled the church to capacity and created much congestion in the very inadequate parking facilities. On November 2, the celebration of All Souls' Day attracted about 250 people to the Church. Anerio's Requiem Mass was sung by the *Collegium Cantorum* of the University of Dallas. In a small role the newly formed *Pueri Cantores* of the Prep School also performed. On December 3, a Benefit Concert was held by these same groups. Following the monastic tradition of the liturgical Office of Readings, music alternated with readings for Advent and Christmas. The readers were monks of the Abbey and seniors of the Prep School. By some providential arrangement, the whole program of 70 minutes went by without any train interrupting it with its whistle!

3) News From the Cistercians in Hungary

The Hungarian Cistercians are blessed with many vocations but are struggling with the lack of personnel to revitalize their schools, educate the young monks and repopulate their monasteries. Presently, seven novices and eight junior members in simple vows are living in the Abbey of Zirc or are studying in Budapest. These are all in their twenties, but at the present, only one priest is below 60. The majority of the community lives dispersed, holding various jobs or living in retirement. Abbot Charles, 77, has convoked a meeting for December 28 to discuss major policy matters: for how many schools can the community accept responsibility, even if they must run them with hired lay faculty. From among the five secondary schools that the Abbey of Zirc previously owned, only the one in Pécs has been fully given back; for three others (in Budapest, Székesfehérvár and Eger) the Cistercians are in negotiation with local authorities.

The community of Zirc plan to elect a new abbot in the first half of the summer.

From our community, so far only Fr. Gilbert returned to Hungary for good. Others (Fr. Benedict and Fr. Julius) provided services for one or two years in the past. In May, Fr. Moses plans to return for good to Hungary.

Construction Plans for the New School Library

Information about the planned School Library has come out in a halting and fragmentary fashion. Different groups have been working to assess both the needs of the means presently available. The first sketch of our architect, Gary Cunningham, was made ready for the parents meeting of September 24. The alumni association discussed its participation before its annual telethon in November and published its plans in the Alumni newsletter, "The Continuum." Finally, on December 5, the Building Committee had its first full and formal meeting. The Committee includes Abbot Denis Farkasfalvy, Prior Fr. Peter Verhalen, Fr. Bernard Marton, the headmaster of the Prep School, the co-chairmen of the Capital Campaign Drive, Jere Thompson ('74) and Jim Moroney III ('74), Cistercian Board Member Jim Taylor, Alumni Andrew Roberts and Peter Smith ('74), architect Gary Cunningham ('72) and builder Wade Andres ('75).

According to the present plans, the new construction will include a library of approx. 10,000 sq. feet, new art facilities, remodeling of the old library to provide a new lunchroom and transformation of the present lunch room for office space. We would like to create space to house and exhibit art works by Fr. Damian, which belong to the permanent legacy of the School and the Abbey.



**MERRY CHRISTMAS!
HAVE A HAPPY HOLIDAY!**

**CISTERCIAN ABBEY
OUR LADY OF DALLAS**

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