



# A LETTER FROM THE ABBEY

Christmas, 2001

## RECALLING MARY'S FAITH

### Thoughts for Advent

On the first day of Advent, December 2, 2001, the much-admired "Collegium Cantorum" of the University of Dallas held a Marian concert. The concert was traditional and yet very different from previous celebrations. Instead of the pseudo-liturgical "twelve lessons" (the Office of Reading is not celebrated any more with twelve lessons!) the Collegium articulated a program of Marian motets and antiphons of ancient and modern music around three themes formulated by three authors. Each looked at Mary's unique role in salvation history in three consecutive steps: the call of the Annunciation, her response in faith, and her participation in the cross and glory. The first reading is rather ancient, written by St. Bernard (1090-1153), not the founder of the Cistercians, but the best known figure of the Order's early history. The second reading comes from an official document of the Church, yet it breathes the live preaching of Pope John Paul II, as it points at Mary as the model of our faith life. The third comes from a little known modern mystic, Adrienne von Speyr (1902-1967), explaining the full perspective of Mary's participation in Jesus' cross and thus setting a model of how to unite with the glorious cross of Jesus. This year our Abbey's

### Christmas greeting

goes to the Cistercian Family in the form of a gift that shares these readings with all those who participate, in one way or another, in the Advent journey of our monastic life.

#### 1. From St. Bernard Homilies On the Annunciation

"And the Virgin's name was Mary"

Mary means "Star of the Sea," a name that well suits the Virgin Mother.

She is that star lifted high above the ocean of this world, shining by her merit and shedding light on us by her example.

O you who struggle amidst this stormy sea. Do not turn away your eyes from this star, if you want to escape wreck!

When the winds of temptation rise, when you run on to the rocks of tribulations, look at the star, think of Mary, call on her by name!

If you follow her, you will not get off course; if you cry to her, you will not give up hope; if you keep her in mind, you will not go astray.

And thus you will learn by experience how rightly it was said: 'And the Virgin's name was Mary.'



Fr. Damian, *Madonna with the Child*

#### 2. From Pope John Paul II's Encyclical "Redemptoris Mater"

"The mystery of the Incarnation was accomplished when Mary uttered her "fiat" — let it be to me according to your word — which made possible, as far as it depended on her in the divine plan, the granting of her Son's desire.

Mary's faith can be compared to that of Abraham, whom Saint Paul calls "our father in faith" (cf. Rom 4:12). In the salvific economy of God's revelation, Abraham's faith constitutes the beginning of the Old Covenant; Mary's faith at the Annunciation inaugurates the New Covenant.

Certainly the Annunciation is the culminating moment of Mary's faith in her awaiting of Christ, but it is also the point of departure from which her whole "journey toward God" begins, her whole pilgrimage of faith. ... Mary's "obedience of faith" during the whole of her pilgrimage will show surprising similarities to the

faith of Abraham. Just like the Patriarch of the People God, so too Mary, during the pilgrimage of her filial and maternal *fiat*, "in hope believed against hope." To believe means "to abandon oneself" to the truth of the word of the living God, knowing and humbly recognizing "how unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways" (Rom 11:33).

### 3. "Mary's YES to the Cross" by Adrienne von Speyr

Assent demanded and given in the name of the Lord always goes beyond anything that could have been imagined or expressed. The Angel's request at the Annunciation went far beyond the immediate issue at hand. Since death is part of life, and death on the Cross was part of the Redeemer's life, the Angel's request included a demand for assent to the end in all its bitterness. The Angel's visit seems to be a beginning, and the Lord's death on the cross an end.

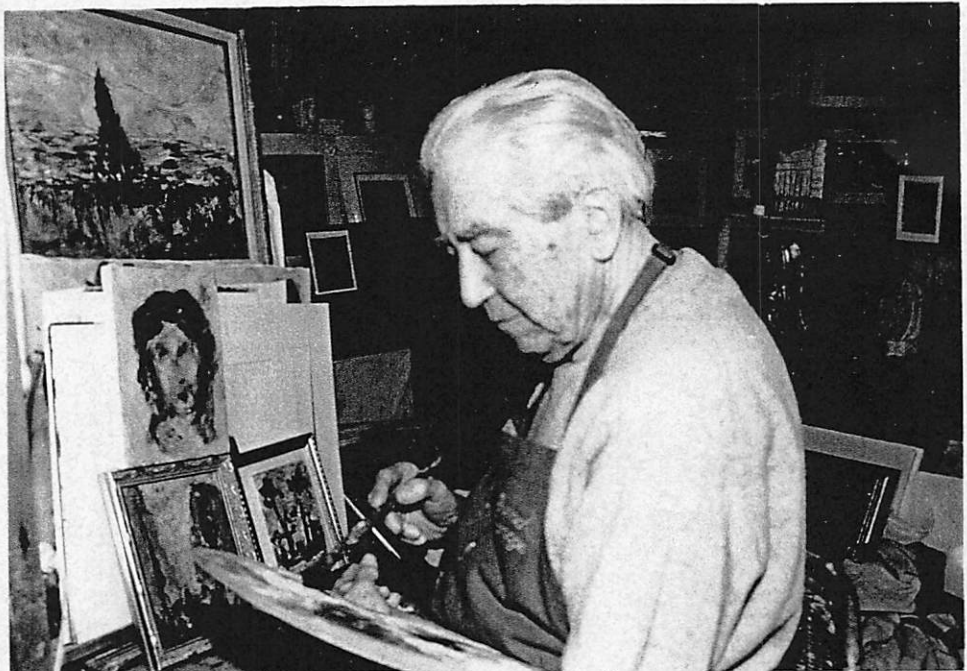
She accepted everything that was offered her, and so she took account of everything that happened on the Cross. She heard the words of the Lord, what he said to the thief on the Cross, and the fact that these words contained a promise. The promise he made on the Cross is the same promise he makes in heaven: to be in paradise with him. ... Mary saw that her own mission, which was to say YES to everything that God sent her, remained unaffected by her sorrow and the fact that she was drawn into the night in which the Son now hung on the Cross. The two missions, her Son's and hers, met and touched, and their union is made manifest by the words spoken to the thief: "Today you will be with me in paradise."

## MOTHER AND CHILD

### AN EXHIBIT OF FR. DAMIAN'S ART WORK

While the choir of the University of Dallas rehearsed for the concert, three Cistercian parents -- art experts and long-time friends of Fr. Damian's -- were busy organizing another Advent event, a limited exhibit of Fr. Damian's madonnas: drawings, reliefs, statues and paintings. Ellen Boozer Daly and Nancy Whitenack, together with Ellen's husband, Mike Daly have been the most important helpers in assessing, listing, storing and organizing Fr. Damian's artistic legacy. They prepared the first auction of his works that generated a scholarship fund of about \$160,000.

Three years ago, December 26, 1998, the day of Fr. Damian's death, we knew that he had left us with more than 1200 pieces of art work in almost every medium. They ranged from the briefest sketches to the most carefully finished and mounted pieces, but the cataloguing and storing of each work posed a very tough task. As if arranged in advance by Divine Providence, we discovered to our surprise that in our ranks we had, all along for the last seven years, the perfect professionals for the task. Ellen Boozer Daly, a member of the parents' class of '01, is an art appraising



*Fr. Damian in his studio (1996)*



and cataloguing expert who has handled many famous and extensive art estates in Dallas. As it turned out Fr. Damian not only held the wedding of the Daly's, but he baptized their son, David, and was linked to them in a close personal friendship.

The rest is well known. Within a year, Fr. Damian's legacy was expertly surveyed and catalogued so that a major auction could be held. Thus a part of Fr. Damian's artwork laid the foundation to a substantial scholarship fund memorializing him and his artistic devotion to God for future generations.

One of Fr. Damian's favorite themes in art was "*MOTHER AND CHILD*" which involves a large and broad scale of images, thoughts and feelings. Surrounding this theme, sacred and secular, medieval and modern, classical and romantic, solemn and playful, abstract and naturalistic images turn up with a superabundant variety of expressions. It seems as if he could not stop coming up with newer and newer fascinating madonnas with hats, veils, simple and exotic hairdos, with or without the Child Jesus, yet with every conceivable symbolism (suns, moons, stars, flowers of all sorts, monograms). As he had said on many occasions, time and again he felt that he had to express what he saw in his own mother, a widow left with six children, a woman for whom he had great empathy and admiration. One may say that the devotion Fr. Damian had to his earthly mother *and* to the mother of Jesus were fully integrated, enriching and completing each other, and helped his departure from this life "in the hour of death." After his last stroke, when he had fully lost his ability to speak, we thought for awhile that he was desperately trying to say something important or to convey a request. But these repeated requests which we and the nurses in the hospital thought he was making turned out to be nothing more than efforts to articulate the second half of the Hail Mary in Hungarian: "pray for us, sinners, now and in the hour of our death..." One of the last pieces he was working on at the end of his life is an unfinished marble relief of the Virgin Mary with a star above her head. He wrote on it in blue chalk the title of the piece in Latin: *STELLA MATUTINA*— "morning star."

### *Ancient Texts on the Mystery of Christmas*

#### *December 25*

"There is no place for mourning on the birthday of Life itself who has swallowed up mortality with all its fear, and brought us the joyful promise of life eternal. Let the saint rejoice for the reward so to be received. Let the sinner give thanks for he is offered forgiveness. Let the pagan take courage for he is called unto life."

(Pope St. Leo the Great)

#### *December 26*

"I know a Virgin bore a son today; I believe that God begot his Son before time began. The manner in which each happened I do not understand but venerate in silence." (St. John Chrysostom).

#### *December 27*

"God the Father dropped down to earth a purse full of his mercy, a purse that burst open upon the cross as it poured out its hidden content, the price of our redemption. The purse dropped down was small but very full. For *unto us a child was given* but in it *the fullness of Godhead dwelt* among us." (St. Bernard of Clairvaux)

#### *December 28*

"He who is in the bosom of the Father is also in the womb of the Virgin. He who lies in the arms of his Mother also walks on the wing of the winds. On high he is adored by angels; here below he eats with tax collectors." (St. Proclus of Constantinople)

#### *December 29*

"*And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.* One can almost hear him saying to the human race: 'You must not give up hope of the possibility of becoming God's children because the Son of God himself, the very Word of God, has been made flesh and dwelt among us. In return, become spiritual yourselves and dwell in him who became flesh and dwelt among us.'" (St. Augustine)

#### *December 30*

"What is more amazing is that Christ continues to be born to us today. Daily he allows himself to be brought forth by every believing soul. What virginity accomplished in the mother of the Lord when she gave birth, a conscience purified and adorned of merits accomplished in our inmost being... The Apostle explains how he can be a mother of spiritual children when he states: *my little children I suffer birth pangs with you again until Christ is formed in you.*" (St. Sedatus of Bézier)

*December 31*

“Out of love for us the Word of God, born once for all in the flesh, wills continually to be born in a spiritual way in those who desire him. Becoming a little child, he fashions himself in them by their virtues and gives them as much knowledge as he knows them to be capable of receiving. The holy Apostle declares: *Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever.* For the Apostle knows that the mystery is always fresh and new and that our understanding of it never diminishes its freshness. (**Saint Maximus the Confessor**)

**PLANNED FOR THE ABBEY CHURCH**

**Christmas Midnight Service** on December 24: Office of Readings begins at 11:30 PM and is followed immediately by the Midnight Mass.

**December 25, 9 AM,** concelebrated High Mass.

**On New Years Eve, December 31, Eucharistic Adoration 9P.M. -12 midnight** with benediction at midnight.

Every First Friday of the school year the Community's Mass at the Abbey will be at 7:30 PM. The Collegium Cantorum of the University of Dallas provides the music each first Friday, except on January 4, when the University will not be in session.

**Holy Week Services:**

Both on Holy Thursday (March 28) and Good Friday (March 29) the services begin at 5:30 PM. The Easter Vigil begins on Holy Saturday, March 30 at 11 PM. On Easter Sunday, March 31, there will be a concelebrated High Mass at 9 AM.

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