



# A Letter from the Abbey

Christmas 2024



## Abbot's Greeting

Fr. Abbot Peter Verhalen, O.Cist.

*"The grace of God has appeared"* (Titus 2:11)

Advent and Christmas at Our Lady of Dallas bring the end-of-semester rush, countertops spilling over with sweets and fruits, visits to families and friends, our own abbey traditions and the opportunity as a community to reflect on the Word Made Flesh once long ago and daily in our own lives.

This year God has blessed us beyond our imaginings with the "appearance" of nine young men in the monastery, seven novices and two newly professed junior monks. Br. Kolbe and Br. Nathaniel, the two newly professed monks, join Br. Barnabas taking philosophy and theology courses at UD in preparation for ordination to the priesthood. To expose them to the energy and joy of the Prep School boys and to help them in their ongoing discernment, they are also teaching: Br. Barnabas, Physics II to the seniors; Br. Kolbe, Latin to the First Formers; and Br. Nathaniel is introducing the boys in Form II to the intricacies of English grammar in English Lab.



Above: Br. Kolbe and Br. Nathaniel make first profession of religious vows.

Like the birth of a new child, these men in formation have brought a new joy and energy to every aspect of our day – from morning meditation and prayer to studies and community recreation. Their numbers also led us to buy more plates, to remodel our kitchen and refectory, and to double the groceries we buy.

Indeed, within our growing community, the grace of God has truly appeared! Please keep us in prayer as we strive to form these young men and adapt our facilities to accommodate them and, God willing, future vocations.



## Seven Novices take the habit

Fr. Matthew Hegemann, O.Cist.

In addition to the seven novices received into the monastery in August, as their newly appointed "Novice Master," I am myself paradoxically a novice! To prepare, I studied at the Gregorian University in Rome, earning a degree for formators.

I also enjoy the support of Fr. Ignatius, my own former novice master, who served in that role for over ten years.

Our novices come from diverse backgrounds: Br. Jerome, from California,

learned of our monastery through his uncle; Br. Gerard worked at Great Hearts in Irving; Br. Elijah, a former seminarian in Chicago, also taught at Great Hearts in San Antonio; Br. Anselm, from Houston, completed his studies at St. Thomas University; Br. Gideon, a UD graduate, hails from Kansas City, Kansas; and the youngest two, Br. Charbel (A&M) and Br. Michael (Columbia), are classmates and alumni (Class of '20) of our Prep school.



## Solar Eclipse



During the solar eclipse of April 8th, Irving experienced totality, quite literally darkness at midday. The birds went silent, and a chill was felt. With their protective glasses, Fr. Bernard, Fr. Robert, and Br. Kolbe looked at the sun. Totality is shown above as captured by Jim Reisch.

**We rejoice in the abundance of vocations our heavenly Father is sending!**

To support and educate our young monks and help us care for our beloved elders, please contribute to the Monastic Fund at [abbey.cistercian.org](http://abbey.cistercian.org) (under "Support Cistercian") or with a check to Our Lady of Dallas Cistercian Abbey, 3550 Cistercian Road, Irving TX 75039.

# Fr. Julius Plaque Dedicated



The Hungarian Community of Dallas-Fort Worth surprised Fr. Julius on October 20 with a beautiful bronze plaque attached to the memorial of "The '56ers" - those who lived through the Hungarian Revolution of 1956.

This gesture was to thank him for his dedicated ministry as their chaplain, "beloved spiritual leader," and friend for over 50 years!



# Br. Nivárd's Sojourn in Dallas

Fr. Bernard Marton, O.Cist.

When after more than nine years in Hungary, I made my way back to Our Lady of Dallas in late July, Br. Nivárd Halasz accompanied me and served as my "seeing-eye dog."

Br. Nivárd belongs to the abbey of Zirc, where he completed his novitiate and his first two years of studies for the priesthood.

In order to live in a larger

community with some monks his own age and to perfect his English, Br. Nivárd hopes to continue his studies for the priesthood here with the other ten young Cistercians in formation.

Br. Nivárd fits in beautifully with his new confreres and has proved to be a valuable asset working in the abbey archives.



Br. Nivárd is welcomed after renewing his temporary vows with newly professed junior monks Br. Nathaniel and Br. Kolbe this August.



# Advent Art Exhibit



Above: Virgin and Child after Giovanni di Paolo, Fr. Ignatius Peacher, O.Cist.

Above right: Madonna and Child, Fr. Raphael Schaner, O.Cist.

In his 2020 painting, Fr. Ignatius offers a contemporary reinterpretation of Giovanni di Paolo's 15th-century depiction of the Virgin and Child. While the style is modern, the mystery of Christmas remains timeless: God with us, "Emmanuel." The Abbey is blessed with monks not only devoted in their faith but also gifted artists.

As has become a tradition, both Fr. Ignatius and Fr. Raphael hosted an art exhibit and sale at the Abbey Guest House the first weekend of Advent. The exhibit coincides with the annual Morning of Recollection for Moms, offering a morning of reflection and retreat as we enter the season of hope.

## Our Hungarian Ties Remain Strong

Fr. Julius and Fr. Bernard: living the Cistercian vocation for a combined 133 years!



## Fr. Bernard Welcomed Home!

Alumni of Fr. Bernard's six classes in the Prep School ('77, '84, '87, '94, '04, & '12) gathered Nov. 7 to honor their cherished Form Master following his nine years of dedicated service to the Abbey of Zirc in Hungary. Organized by Mike Smith '77 and Michael Moroney '77, the event included heartfelt toasts and the announcement

of over \$30,000 raised for the Marton Brothers Scholarship.

Summing up the sentiments expressed was this line from a Memory Book they gifted: "Thank you, Fr. Bernard, for being there for us since 1968. Through your unwavering commitment, you have left a lasting impact."

## Alumni Follow Christ

While more than 25% (9/32) of the monks in our Abbey have come from the Prep School, we also rejoice in other ministerial vocations among our alumni, including: three who have entered the priesthood or the seminary for a diocese; one Franciscan priest in AZ; one priest in the Anglican Church; and, most recently, Dr. Tommy Heyne '02 ordained to the permanent diaconate for Boston by Cardinal O'Malley.



## MonkTrips

For a little R&R, Cistercians young and old enjoy "monk trips," summer vacations for 2-5 confreres. In 2024, some hiked outside Santa Fe, while others stayed in vacation homes in Bandon, OR and Whitefish, MT, generously offered by friends of the monastery.





*Our Lady of Dallas Cistercian Abbey  
3550 Cistercian Road  
Irving, Texas 75039*

### UPCOMING EVENTS

Christmas Eve  
Office of Readings 11:30 p.m.  
Midnight Mass 12:00 a.m.  
Christmas Day Mass 9:00 a.m.  
New Year's Eve  
Adoration and Benediction  
9:00 p.m - 12:00 a.m.  
New Year's Day Mass 9:00 a.m.

### DAILY SCHEDULE

Morning Prayer - 6:00 a.m.  
Adoration - 5:30 p.m.  
Evening Prayer - 6:00 p.m.  
Daily Mass - 6:35 a.m.  
Mass on Sunday - 9:00 a.m.  
Confessions Wed. - 4:00-5:00 p.m.



Merry Christmas from the monks at Our Lady of Dallas Cistercian Abbey!