



A Letter from the Abbey

Pentecost 2025



The Altar of Repose in the Abbey Crypt on Holy Thursday.
photo by David Woo

Abbot's Greeting

Fr. Abbot Peter Verhalen, O. Cist.

What does the future hold for Our Lady of Dallas? One never really knows what even tomorrow will bring, much less a coming year. Nevertheless, with seven current novices persevering beautifully in discerning their vocations and with the promise of even more next year, we have to make reasonable plans! We are, for example, planning for increased food costs. (Young men eat a lot!) We are also anticipating at least three to five years of graduate studies in philosophy and theology for each young monk in preparation for the priesthood. Similarly, we will be assigning them modest work in the School to help them in their discernment of life as not only a monk and a priest, but a teacher as well.

On top of all of this, the Community is planning an entirely new initiative! Soon, one of our monks will travel to Budapest, Hungary, to discern if and how Our Lady of Dallas might support young vocations there. Fr. John, having graduated his class at the Prep School in May, has generously volunteered to lead this effort. Already learning Hungarian, he is eager to investigate

possible ways of supporting the movement of the Spirit in and around Cistercian institutions in Hungary.



Br. Gerard hosted a "Teacher Appreciation" lunch in the courtyard.



The Stations of the Cross Trail on Good Friday
photo by David Woo

Most importantly, we plan to continue praying and striving to live our life ever more authentically. We know that many of you join us in prayer – our 6:30 a.m. Mass regularly attracts up to 100 people, and more and more people are joining us for adoration every evening at 5:30. Thank you for this most valuable support.

Given all God's blessings, we expect to fill every bedroom of the monastery next year. We are 32 monks now living in a monastery with 35 bedrooms, and we expect at least three novices in the fall. The plan is to add a new wing to the monastery and rework our kitchen and dining area!

Our Interiority after His Ascension



Fr. Joseph Van House, O. Cist

Every winter and spring Christians focus extra on the central mysteries of our faith: our Father's sending of his Son in mortal flesh, and that Son's victorious quest through our realm of alienation, turning it inside out to become a realm of love and communion. The celebration of Christ's Ascension at the beginning of the summer brings in a different, less structured time. The lifting of Jesus's flesh to a reward beyond our world is a great joy, but it also represents a spiritual challenge: his face becomes harder to see. And

this basic pressure of our faith easily rhymes with the difficult way the spiritual heat of the summer can sometimes trick us into wandering off into waterless places.

Cistercian spirituality is especially devoted to Jesus's Ascension, including the way it stretches us. St. Bernard, for example, preached about the Risen Christ's words to Mary Magdalene, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father" (Jn 20:17). He interpreted them as something like: "I know this experience of felt closeness has been consoling to you, but learning to love

An Advent Tradition



Fr. Francis and Fr. John attended Las Posadas, a Mexican Advent tradition of processing through the streets to look for lodging for Our Lady and St. Joseph before the birth of the Christchild. This event was hosted by Puede Network, an organization founded by long-time employee Raul Gonzalez and his family to mentor inner-city Hispanic youth through sports and tutoring.




Monk Rugby!

On a stormy Saturday afternoon, eight Cistercian monks jogged over to Holy Trinity Seminary to play rugby.

It was quite the ragtag crew: mismatched "jerseys," a near 20-year age range spanning novices, junior brothers, and priests. The monks had been training for the past couple of months to play the "game for barbarians played by gentlemen."

A large and lively crowd, consisting largely of monks and seminarians, gathered to watch the showdown.

The seminarians had a substantial size advantage, but the scrappy defense and swift offense of the monks managed to bring home a 10-5 victory!

Br. Gideon, who organized the event, noted, "The game itself was lots of fun, but far more valuable was the fellowship it fostered among the members of our little team, and the opportunity to form stronger bonds of charity with our diocesan brothers-in-formation."

me and my Father and my people is about more than your consolation. Get ready to mature and to deepen.”

How can we favor a situation where the summer heat serves to ripen the fruit of Christian love? First and foremost by accepting the challenge: acknowledging that whenever God seems to hide, it is to summon us to a deeper love and fidelity.

What about more concrete suggestions? One offered from the great tradition of Christian monasticism would be to increase our holy reading. The Rule of St. Benedict famously guides monks to “work, pray, and read.” Wise

reading helps us declare our independence from the voices (and videos!) that surround us and tempt us to lose the narrative of life, whether we are at the beach or on the bus. It is a precious tool for more freely assembling our minds and hearts.

But above all we must abandon ourselves to God with trust. The Risen Christ and his Holy Spirit are present to transform us, even when we do not see them. And, as Pope Leo XIV taught on May 10th, “it is up to us to be docile listeners to his voice and faithful ministers of his plan of salvation.”

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Profession of Vows

Sunday, Aug. 17 9:00 a.m.

DAILY SCHEDULE

Morning Prayer - 6:00 a.m.

Daily Mass - 6:35 a.m.

Adoration - 5:30 p.m.

Evening Prayer - 6:00 p.m.

Mass on Sunday - 9:00 a.m.

Confessions Wed. - 4:00-5:00 p.m.



Fr. Stephen traveled to Rome for a conference in honor of the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea. The conference was organized by the Angelicum and the Augustinianum, where Fr. Stephen studied. While there, he met up with several of his former university students. Fr. Stephen said, “It was a powerful experience to return to the places of my formation with the students whom I am working to form.”

O. Cist at SEEK

Fr. Christopher, Br. Barnabas and Fr. John traveled to Washington, D.C. to attend SEEK25, a conference organized by FOCUS (Fellowship of Catholic University Students) and held simultaneously this year in Salt Lake City and Washington, D.C.

About 21,000 people attended SEEK this year, including 46 bishops and hundreds of priests and religious. Each day involved liturgy, prayer, and dynamic speakers. Presentation topics included the “kerygma” or core message of the Gospel (salvation through union with Jesus), exhortations to conversion, and encouragements to seek a personal encounter with Jesus.

Br. Barnabas, reflecting on his trip to D.C., said, “It was nice to have time to worship, time to relax, time to attend breakout talks, and surprisingly, time to be silent.”

The high point of any SEEK conference is the late-night opportunity for Adoration and the Sacrament of Reconciliation. It was a powerful moment: many thousands of people, young and old, all praying together and surrounded by beautiful music and lights, as the Eucharist was processed throughout the crowd.





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

photos by David Woo



Opportunities to give to Our Lady of Dallas Cistercian Abbey

The Monastic Fund is the Abbey's annual fund that defrays costs, such as education expenses of our young monks and healthcare costs for our elderly monks whose lifelong dedication to the Abbey and School warrants the very best care. Over the next several years, this fund will be very important as the Abbey pays for 3-5 years of graduate studies for each young brother as he prepares for the priesthood and teaching.

The Responding to a Gift Campaign will enable the Abbey to add a new wing to provide more bedrooms for the increased number of monks and to update the kitchen, dining room and maintenance areas. Other priorities for this campaign are increased parking and landscape for privacy and security.



photo by David Woo