



A Letter from the Abbey

Cistercian Abbey • Our Lady of Dallas

Briefly

Fr. Greg in Chicago

Recently, Father Gregory attended a three-day conference at Chicago's Loyola University entitled "Revelation and Convergence: Flannery O'Connor among the Philosophers and Theologians."

The conference was a great resource as Fr. Gregory continues his study, teaching, and writing on her works.

Fr. Roch in St. Louis

Fr. Roch was asked to give this year's Kenrick Lecture at the Kenrick-Glennon Seminary in St. Louis on October 6. The title of the public lecture was: "Priests for the New Evangelization. Reflections on Priestly Spirituality."

Newman Conference

In July, Fr. Peter, Fr. Joseph, Fr. Ignatius, and Fr. Thomas attended a conference at St. Anselm's (Benedictine) College in Manchester, NH, on the educational ideals of the great 19th century thinker and churchman, Blessed John Henry Newman.

A Cardinal and famous literary figure, Newman lived in schools and universities throughout his life, and through his writings advocated a powerful vision of how Catholic education should help reveal the harmonies between faith and reason.

Spiritual Conferences

Day of Recollection for Young Men

Join the Cistercian community for a day of prayer, spiritual conferences, and the sacrament of Reconciliation on November 6, 2011. Contact Fr. Ignatius for information.

Winter Vocations Retreat

If you feel you may be called to the Priestly and Monastic way of life, join the Cistercian Monastery for a few days of prayer, reflection and theological conferences. The retreat will take place at the end of December, concluding with our New Year's Eve adoration. Contact Fr. Ignatius for more information or to sign up.

Abbot Denis celebrates 50th Jubilee Mass attracts large crowd despite rainy weather

On the Feast of St. Denis, Sunday October 9th, Fr. Abbot Denis celebrated his Golden Jubilee in the Abbey Church.

Wearing an alb given to him by his mother 50 years ago, Fr. Abbot expressed gratitude for the support he's received.

Fr. Abbot also used the same chalice he was given shortly before his first mass, a gold chalice with a crown of thorns around the middle.

During his homily, Fr. Peter Verhalen shared a story about the ceremony in which

Fr. Denis and Fr. Julius were ordained in July 1961 at the abbey of Lilienfeld in Austria.

Included in the Rite of Ordination is a long prayer during which those who are to be ordained must stand.

In the warm abbey, wearing a habit, alb and cucula, Fr. Julius began to feel light headed.

Under his breath, he whispered to Fr. Denis, "I think I'm going to faint."

Fr. Abbot, demonstrating the sort of firm leadership style for
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Photo by Jim Resch

Abbot Denis on October 9.



Photo by Jim Resch

Ordinations

(Left to right) Br. Lawrence (partially hidden), Br. Stephen, Fr. Ambrose, and Fr. Thomas with Bishop Kevin Farrell.

Thomas and Ambrose join the priesthood

Stephen and Lawrence ordained deacons

The Lord has continued to bless the Cistercian community in Dallas with men following their call to the priesthood. Fr. Thomas Esposito and Fr. Ambrose Strong were ordained priests in a ceremony held on August 14, 2011. In the same ceremony Br. Stephen Gregg '01 and Br. Lawrence Brophy '01 were ordained deacons.

Bishop Kevin Farrell, of the Diocese of
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August ordinations

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Dallas, ministered the rite in front of a packed crowd in the Abbey Church.

Relying on The Rule of St. Benedict in his homily, Bishop Farrell urged the newly ordained to remember to live out their ministry in such a way as to challenge the strong to be their best, while making sure the weak always feel safe.

Fr. Ambrose commented that the day of Ordination was unlike any of his other accomplishments in life.

“It’s completely different from every goal I’ve striven for,” he said.

“It’s not like finally getting that degree or job that one can work so hard to attain,” he explained.

“It’s a new way of perceiving my own identity since it has changed forever who I am.”

Commenting on the Rite itself, Fr. Thomas felt particularly moved by the Sign of Peace, during which the new priests share in a short exchange with each priest present in the sanctuary.

“The exchange of peace was extremely moving,” he said. “The thrill on the fathers’ faces brought me great joy.”

For Br. Lawrence, the moment which struck him the most was lying prostrate in front of the altar during the Litany of the Saints.

“It was such an intimate moment,” remembered Br. Lawrence, “lying face down, hearing Frs. Bernard and Augustine name the saints and then praying for their intercession, all the while thinking about and praying for the ordination that was about to take place.”

Since the Ordinations, Fr. Ambrose has started his career at Cistercian Prep School, becoming the Form Master for the First Form.

Fr. Thomas and Br. Stephen have returned to Rome to continue their studies.

Br. Lawrence is continuing his work in Mathematics at the Univ. of North Texas.



(Top) Brs. Lawrence, Stephen, Ambrose, and Thomas lie prostrate before Bishop Kevin Farrell (inset). (Middle) Thomas and Ambrose are ordained. (Bottom, l-r) First Masses of Fr. Ambrose and Fr. Thomas.





Photos by Jim Reisch

Jubilee reception



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which he has come to be known, replied “Sit Down!”

“It was a wonderful way to celebrate not only the long pastoral life of the Abbot,” said School Board Member Joel Fontenot, “but also the fruits of his service to God and the community.

“The UD choir lifted my soul in beautiful song, Father Peter’s homily provided insight and a meaningful connection to Christ, and the Abbot’s final words of thanks were touchingly heartfelt.”



A longtime friend and colleague honors the abbot

By Fr. Roch Kereszty

Fr. Denis’s life is an amazing illustration of the truth of Jesus’ words: he who gives up everything and follows me “will receive a hundred times more in this present age ... and eternal life in the age to come” (Mk 10: 29-30).

Many decisive events of Fr. Abbot’s life canceled or postponed his own plans and dreams, but by embracing God’s will as expressed through his superiors, he turned his life into a blessing for many.

Becoming aware of his call to the Cistercian way of life in elementary school, Miklós Farkasfalvy entered the underground Cistercian Order in Communist Hungary right after graduating from high school in 1956. Two years later, our superior, Fr. Lawrence, sent him with other junior Cistercians to Rome to study theology with the hope that eventually we would be able to return to Zirc.

Outside of Hungary, however, the vicar of the imprisoned Abbot of Zirc was Fr. Anselm, the prior of the monastery in Dallas. Already at our first meeting with him in Rome, he told us that he needs all of us in Dallas.

So after finishing his doctorate in theology, Fr. Denis was not allowed to fulfill his dream of studying Sacred Scripture at the Biblical Institute, but had to come to Dallas in 1962 where he was asked to get a master’s degree in Mathematics to meet the needs of the recently opened Cistercian Prep School.

Had he refused to become a math teacher, his contribution to the fledgling school would have been much more limited and, after the resignation of Fr. Damian in 1968, he may not have been appointed headmaster.

Suffering from a more than precarious financial situation and other serious problems, the School may not have survived let alone flourish without Fr. Denis’s leadership. Had Fr. Denis not become

a successful headmaster, he may not have been elected abbot after Abbot Anselm’s term expired in 1988.

He was reelected four times for six-year terms. In 2012, having reached the age of 75, his abbatial service will come to an end. The many wonderful things God has worked in our community through his leadership are well known.

After a long period of anxious waiting and seemingly unheeded prayers (between 1975 and 2003 we received only four solid vocations), we were given eleven most promising young men in six years, five of whom are already priests and the rest are close to ordination.

At a recent Abbot’s Circle dinner, Abbot Denis revealed what he believes is the secret of the Abbey. He read from the prison memoirs of our Abbot Wendelin in Hungary who — after describing with a physics teacher’s precision the brutal treatment he received in a Communist prison — concluded that he would not trade anything for those seven and half years because he had received so much grace during that time.

Indeed, the prayers in heaven of those Hungarian Cistercians, Abbot Wendelin, Fr. Lawrence and many others who suffered imprisonment for remaining faithful to their vocation, are our greatest invisible treasure and the source of so many blessings.

In spite of his immense workload and countless serious surgeries, Fr. Denis still finished his licentiate in Sacred Scripture during two sabbaticals, translated into beautiful poetic Hungarian the whole Psalter, wrote many books and even more scholarly articles in both English and Hungarian.

We hope that after putting down the burden of his office he can still dedicate many years and new energy to opening up for us the inexhaustible riches of the Word of God.

We are most grateful to God for him and his fifty years of priestly service.

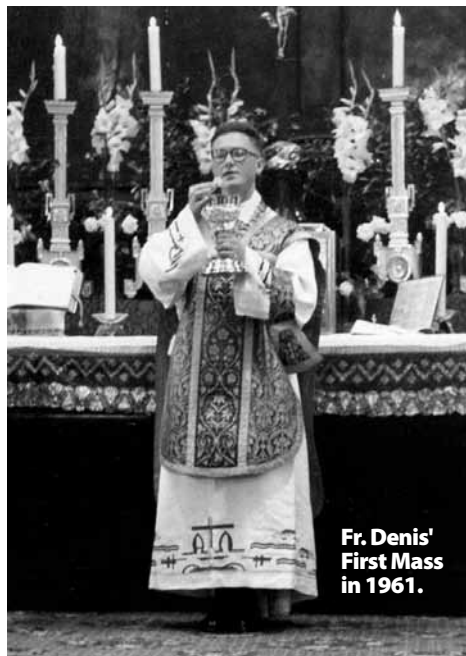


Photo courtesy of Abbot Denis Farkasfalvy

Fr. Denis' First Mass in 1961.

A “cloud of witnesses”

This Newsletter sends you, in the form of brief reports, the record of just over two eventful and busy months. Each is a precious document portraying the way God takes care of our community.

He never stops the challenge, may not even diminish the pressure, yet constantly shows the fruitfulness of our life, in spite of our feet which are occasionally ready to drag and slow us down.



THE ABBOT'S VIEW

Fr. Denis Farkasfalvy

As the vows of four brothers, ordinations of two priests and two deacons, the first masses of the new priests and my own Golden Jubilee followed in close succession, I looked time and again at the big picture and tried to repress my disabling emotions and the tears surging in my eyes.

I had thought time and again of the big Catch-22 feeling that came over me when I was installed as abbot of the monastery 23 years ago in 1988: “This place needs a church in order to draw vocations – this monastery will never convince

anyone to help us build a church because we have no vocations.”

Less than two years later three leaders from the Class of '74 surprised me with a proposal: “Allow us to raise funds, find an architect and a builder in order to build a church for the Abbey; our only condition is that all this work be done by alums of Cistercian.”

With these memories I looked at those big stone blocks time and again. Believe it or not, these stones speak to me every day.

As another sudden memory, ten minutes before my Jubilee Mass I went to the sacristy and in the closet began to search: maybe I would find somewhere the alb my mother made for my mass which I had not used for 40 years — to avoid thinking of her immense frustration in being denied a passport to come to my First Mass. Only the alb arrived; she did not.

The first place I began to search I found this 50-year-old alb, with its aged (and dated) embroidery that my mother made herself in 1960 and 1961, allowing nobody to help her with it.

That was what I wore for the next hour under the golden chasuble. I was again clothed in the symbol of the joint sacrifice we made, when we both quietly realized that my spending a lifetime in a place of which we knew nothing was bordering on the “too much.”

As the mass started I stopped counting the reminders of all that had happened: those aging men in the first pews who were just nine years old when I was 29, the powerful choir that has sung in our church for 15 years, the young brothers and priests for whom I have asked and prayed, as Abraham for his offspring “hoping against hope.” (Rom 4:18)

And, of course the stones kept on talking about all the things that were given but are still mostly hidden from sight.

Cistercians in Texas – the first 50 or more years.

Where does the next turn of this journey lead us?

It was so meaningful, so happy to be together at that mass with “a cloud of witnesses,” (Heb 12:1) old and young, in heaven and on earth, all praising God.

I had not used [the alb] for 50 years — to avoid thinking of her immense frustration in being denied a passport to come to my First Mass.

WITHOUT VOWS



TEMPORARY VOWS



Postulant

During this short period of time (lasting between a few weeks and a few months) the young man has moved into the monastery but is not yet a brother. He retains his baptismal name and wears his “normal” clothes all the time. This is an introductory period in which he gets to know the monks and the day-to-day schedule of the monastery. He joins the community during prayers and meals, and prays for continued aid in the discernment process.



Junior Brother

At the end of the novitiate year the brother who chooses to stay applies to take Temporary Vows. This period of three years is externally noticed by the change from the white scapular to the black one, which he will wear for the duration of his monastic life. During these three years the brother begins more formal studies in Philosophy and Theology in preparation for the priesthood and a future life of teaching. He may also teach in the Prep School and continues his duties around the Abbey. The exact path of each Junior Brother is unique — depending on his educational background, his personality, and the needs of the monastery. At the end of three years, the brother has the choice: if he chooses to renew, he does so for another three years.





Diaconate

After taking Final Vows the brother can be ordained to the Diaconate. In the Catholic Church there are two types of Deacons: Transitional and Permanent. Because we are a community of priests, every brother who enters is on the path to the priesthood. As a deacon, the brother may read the Gospel, preach during mass, as well as celebrate the sacrament of Baptism and officiate at a wedding. He also assists the priest at the altar during the Liturgy of the Eucharist.



Postulant to priest

The path of a Cistercian brother

 RENEWAL OF VOWS
 SOLEMN VOWS



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Novice

This year-long period of discernment is recognized by the all-white novice habit. The Postulant who becomes a Novice receives his new monastic name and his habit in a small private ceremony. In our community the novice gives the abbot a list of three names of saints, from which the abbot chooses one to assign to the new monk for the duration of his monastic life. The Novitiate is a time in which the young man divides his time between chores in the monastery, studies, and prayer. At this time the chores are primarily within the monastery: caring for the sacristy and the church, looking after the elderly, maintaining the grounds, and looking after the library and other areas in the monastery. The classes are intended to provide the foundation for his spiritual life and introduce him to monastic life. He takes classes in spiritual theology, the Psalms, the liturgy, and the monastic way of life (Cistercian History, the Rule of St. Benedict and the Theology of St. Bernard) as well as participating in spiritual conferences led by the Novice Master. During the Novitiate the young monk takes no vows, but discerns his vocation and decides if he feels called to continue in our Abbey.



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...ce to renew his vows. If he



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Solemn Vows

After the novitiate and about four years in Temporary Vows (the initial three years, plus at least one year after renewal) the brother who has discerned his calling to the monastic life will ask to take Solemn Vows (also called Final Vows or Perpetual Vows). These vows are made not for a period of three years, but rather *ad mortem* (until death). After the recommendation of the Abbot's Council, the entire community of solemnly professed monks votes whether to accept the monk's request. The external life of a brother in Solemn Vows will appear very similar to that of one in temporary vows — the same habit is worn, many of the same tasks are being performed — but internally there is a big change: the period of discernment is officially over. As a symbol of his full entry into the community the brother is outfitted with the liturgical garment, the cuculla which he will wear when he celebrates Mass with the community in the future.



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Priesthood

Because monks of our monastery are all called to the priesthood, the culmination of the journey is the rite of ordination to the priesthood. After at least five years in the community, the Brother becomes a Father in a ceremony presided over by the Bishop. As a priest he is now able to celebrate mass, hear confessions, and anoint the sick.

Abbey Church Services

WINTER SCHEDULE

All Souls' Mass, November 2	7:30 pm
Christmas Eve, December 24	11:30 pm
Office of Readings, Midnight Mass	
Christmas Day, December 25	9 am
concelebrated High Mass	
On New Year's Eve, Dec. 31	9–midnight
Eucharistic Adoration (benediction)	
Feast of Our Lady, January 1	9 am

DAILY SCHEDULE

Office of Readings and Morning Prayer	6 am
Evening Prayer	6 pm
Daily Mass (Mon - Sat.)	6:30 am
Mass on Sunday	9 am
First Friday Mass	7:30 pm

The Collegium Cantorum of the University of Dallas will join us for Mass on the First Friday of every month during the school year.



Fr. Matthew embraces Fr. Ambrose at his August 14 ordination.

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

Brs. Stephen and Lawrence take big step

The two brothers make solemn vows, and Brs. Anthony and John renew their vows

In early July two members of Our Lady of Dallas made their solemn profession.

Br. Stephen Gregg '01 and Br. Lawrence Brophy '01 promised, until death, obedience to the Abbot, stability and

the monastic way of life.

In the same ceremony Br. Anthony Bigney and Br. John Bayer renewed their temporary vows.

During the ceremony the two brothers

who took their final vows received the cuculla, the traditional garment worn by Cistercian monks during liturgical acts.

For Br. Lawrence, this moment was particularly moving.

"Receiving the cuculla was really a big deal," he said. "I had worn one a couple of times in Rome, but it was something else to have one with my name written in it which I will wear so frequently in the coming years."

"Renewing my vows this time around was different," said Br. John, "because there was less trepidation than when I made my first vows, and even less than when I first entered the novitiate."

"It seems that the longer I live here the more ready and excited I am to give myself away to monastic and priestly life."

Is he anticipating next year's Solemn Vows?

"Presuming that this is, in fact, God's will for me," Br. John explained, "I can only pray that he will continue to bless me with such conviction in the future, as the opportunity for solemn vows draws nearer."



Br. Lawrence Brophy '01 and Br. Stephen Gregg '01 stand before Abbot Denis and Fr. Paul during the July 3 ceremony in which they made their solemn profession.