

# Unlikely Texans

A host of bold Hungarian Cistercians came to America after World War II determined to preserve their way of life. Finding a home in the New World wouldn't be easy.

By David E. Stewart '74

*Editor's note: In the spring of 1955, seven Cistercian Fathers moved into a residence on Swiss Avenue. Two years later, construction began on the first wing of the current monastery, which was consecrated in 1958. The following story, one of a number of historical perspectives we'll bring you over the next few years, is dedicated to the pioneers whose efforts 50 years ago made possible the Cistercian Abbey and Prep School we know today.*

“GOOD LORD,” SHIVERED FR. BENEDICT Monostori as he lifted his clothes onto the bank and climbed naked from a five-foot-deep irrigation canal. Along with 19 Cistercian student monks and another Cistercian priest, he had escaped only minutes before across the 50-yard-wide Hungarian border, replete with guard towers, barbed wire, and minefields.

Now they stood shaking silently as they dried themselves, trying to steel themselves against the cold and the uncertainty that lay ahead. A couple of hours remained before dawn. For a moment, Fr Benedict's gaze was drawn back towards Hungary.

“Never again in our lives will we return to our homeland,” he thought. Then he turned back towards Austria. There wasn't time for reminiscing.

Peering into the chilly darkness, Fr. Benedict slowly shook his head, “I don't even know where we are going.”

Only 13 of the 21 would make it to Vienna and eventually to Stams and Rome. Eight were arrested on a bus en route to Vienna, returned to Hungary, and imprisoned (including Fr. Pascal Kis-Horvath).

Nearly eight weeks later, on October 29, Abbot Wendelin Endrédy, the abbot of Zirc, was arrested and imprisoned. The Soviets were slamming the door on the Cistercian Order in Hungary. No more Cistercians would manage to escape the country again until the Revolution of October 1956.

But prior to his arrest, Abbot Wendelin had helped dozens of Cistercians from the Abbey of Zirc (the mother abbey of all Hungarian Cistercians, pronounced ZEERTS) escape. They would keep the traditions of the Abbey living and breathing in America.

The idea of going to America had been proposed by a 29-year-old priest living in Eger, Hungary in the summer of 1945. A brilliant man of many passions, Fr. Louis J. Lekai was repulsed by the idea of a Soviet occupation. While many expected the Soviets to abandon

**ARRIVING SAFELY IN STAMS** In September 1950, Fr. Benedict Monostori and 12 student monks arrived at the Cistercian Abbey of Stams, in Tirol, Austria shortly after their escape from Hungary. Five ended up in Dallas, Br. Daniel Csanyi (far left), Br. Melchior Chladek, Fr. Benedict, Br. Aloysius Kimencz, (the sixth, seventh and eighth from the left), and Br. David Balas (second from the right). The second priest in the photo is thier host, the prior of Stams.

Hungary by 1947, Fr. Louis believed they had more sinister plans.

"We must look forward," he wrote to friend and former Cistercian classmate Fr. Anselm Nagy on July 19, 1945, "and do our best with what is left of our lives. We must work and begin to make plans. For my part, I have formed a plan which I have already communicated to our abbot."

Establishing a foundation in America appeared to him to be the only certain way to preserve their way of life.

"I do not want to exaggerate," he concluded his letter to Fr. Anselm, "but one may say that the survival of our community depends on our readiness to work with dedication and diligence for what we set out as our goal."

That plan – to build a school and a monastery in the New World – was approved by Abbot Wendelin in a surprisingly swift fashion. (The Abbey of Zirc had developed a distinctly Hungarian identity, one that set it apart from the rest of the Cistercian Order and made it seem an unlikely candidate for a move to the New World.)

This decisive and unprecedented move would preserve the legacy of Zirc, even while the doors of the Abbey itself remained closed to religious activity for 45 years.

Between 1946 and 1968, a total of 42 Cistercians from the Abbey of Zirc would land safely in the US (although 10 eventually left the Order).

The first of those priests from Zirc, the pioneers who arrived in America between 1946 and 1954, faced a complex set of problems before they could establish the monastery they had envisioned.

FR. LOUIS, WHO WOULD awe history students at the University of Dallas years later, had been pushing for an American foundation since 1945. He was still pushing in the summer of 1953.

Fr. Louis and Fr. Anselm embarked together on several exploratory expeditions to find a permanent home. Their first, in August 1949, took them to 19 western and southwestern dioceses during a three-week period.

Fr. Louis served as the pitch man, touting the Cistercians' skills with gusto, while Fr. Anselm listened politely, carefully took notes, and analyzed the prospects.

But diocesan officials who met with Fr. Louis and Fr. Anselm could be forgiven if they had some reservations about these Cistercians from Hungary.

Heavy accents, mispronounced words, and still-developing grammar shrouded the meaning of their sentences.

While Fr. Louis attempted to extol their Hungarian teaching experience and advanced degrees, his listeners must have wondered how American secondary school students could learn anything from these Hungarians if they could not understand them.

(Even decades later, parents of students at Cistercian Prep School would have a devil of a time deciphering the homilies delivered by Fr. Anselm at Opening and Closing Ceremonies.)

"The mastering of the new language proved to be far more difficult and required a far longer time than had been anticipated," Fr. Louis acknowledged in a 1968 article published in *The Records of the American Catholic Historical Society*.

That first trip in 1949, however, generated offers from both San Diego and Dallas. Fr. Louis spent four months in San Diego before concluding that the venture — to create a prep school in conjunction with the planned University of San Diego — posed too many financial risks. (The Dallas offer was not pursued at this time; perhaps the Texas heat scared them away.)

Despite the language difficulties, the Cistercians clearly communicated their pride – even their arrogance – about their Hungarian lineage and their affiliation with the Abbey of Zirc.

"[Hungarian is] a language that lacks resemblance to all major idioms of the world and conveys upon its native speakers a sense of both isolation and singularity," explained Abbot Denis Farkasfalvy in his 1998 account of the founding of the Cistercian Monastery in Dallas in *Cistercians in Texas*.

This "singularity" is captured in an old saying. Hungarians like to quote it in Latin as if it were an internationally known proverb: "*Extra Hungarian non est vita*" ("Outside Hungary, there is no life").

The Cistercians' intense pride in the Abbey of Zirc stemmed from the Order's 800-year history in Hungary and the abbey's far-reaching monastic, educational, and pastoral activities.

The Abbey of Zirc first became involved in education in the late 18th century. By the 20th century, five Cistercian *gymnasiums* (grades 5 through 12), considered among the finest schools in all of Hungary, were scattered throughout the country. All the teachers at these schools were Cistercian monks who had been educated at the best institutions in Europe. In 1942, the abbey's 159 priests included 68 with Ph.D.s and 91 with masters' degrees. In addition, 50 novices and students were studying for the priesthood.

Their activities were financed by the abbey's 40,000-acres, an endowment that had been accumulated since the Middle Ages and was turned —

### The players

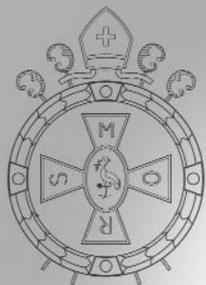
## Bringing Zirc to America

**Abbot Wendelin Endrédi (1895-1981)** The Abbot of Zirc would preside over the final "glory years" of the Cistercians in Hungary. A near saintly figure, his decisive actions would preserve the legacy of Zirc by helping monks and student monks leave Hungary to establish a foundation in America. Arrested in October 1950, he was tortured and held in solitary confinement in miserable conditions for six years. "As a result of all these experiences," he said, "my life was enriched immeasurably. I feel no anger against any person who tortured me."

**Fr. Louis Lekai (1916-1994)** He initiated the 1945 plan to create an American "branch" of the Abbey of Zirc. Upon his arrival in America in 1949, he tirelessly and passionately scoured the states in search of the right home for the Hungarians. A world-class historian, he would teach history at the University of Dallas from 1956 to 1981, when he suffered a debilitating stroke.

**Fr. Anselm Nagy (1915-1988)** Abbot Wendelin sent Fr. Anselm to America in 1946 to investigate the possibilities for a foundation. A methodical mathematician, Fr. Anselm would serve as a steadying influence on the often passionate and independent-minded monks from Zirc. His tireless fundraising and conservative financial management would help the community build the monastery and school with virtually no debt.

**Abbot General Sighard Kleiner (1904-1995)** The young Abbot General, who was elected in 1953, hoped to reform the Cistercians into a more contemplative monastic order. These attempts would fail. While he would have his differences with the Hungarians, he would eventually support their new community in Texas.



Abbot Wendelin Endrédi

Abbot General Sighard Kleiner

Our Lady of

under the care of the monks — into a well oiled, first-class agricultural estate in the 20th century.

Alumni of the Cistercian schools ran many of the country's largest institutions. The Cistercians, in fact, had become so intertwined with government and society that the abbot of Zirc occupied an *ex officio* seat in the upper chamber of the Hungarian legislature.

Their proud 800-year heritage — and the Soviets' savage attempts to snuff it out — would sit like a large chip upon the shoulders of the Cistercians who escaped Hungary.

**“D**EAR DAMIAN,” WROTE FR. LOUIS TO Fr. Damian Szödényi early in the summer of 1953. “In pursuit of our well known goal, I will undertake an exploratory trip with Anselm in the first half of August. I beg you to prayerfully consider volunteering together with someone like Odo (Fr. Odo Egres) to undertake a similar trip to the Northwest.”

“It may be a very good idea to go to Canada also which you could do together with Anselm in the last week of August so that in the first days of September we could have a more fruitful discussion concerning our future. If after having exhausted all possibilities it will appear to be more prudent to wait for awhile, I will stop pushing.”

Damian prayerfully declined. Despite all his brilliance, vision, and passion, Fr. Louis had no official authority over any of the 20 or so Hungarian Cistercians living in America in 1953.

Besides, most of the Hungarian Cistercians in America were preoccupied with the daily chores of trying just to assimilate into their adopted land, earn degrees, or teach.

This diverse group of men — some urbane, others provincial, some liberal, others conservative, some artistic, others mathematical — had been uprooted from their homeland, deprived of family, friends, and the Abbey of Zirc. All longed for and needed some semblance of stability and normalcy.

Fr. Ralph March, a suave and talented monk with a playful sense of humor, had been directed to the US by his superiors in 1952. He begrudgingly left Paris, a city he had grown to love in the five years he spent there after earning his doctorate. (His dissertation on Cistercian chants remains to this day the most authoritative text on the subject.) Now, he was quickly sprouting roots in Milwaukee while running the Cistercian's study house there, teaching French at

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Marquette, and conducting the university choir.

With every passing year, Fr. Louis and Fr. Anselm knew it would become increasingly difficult to uproot monks like Fr. Ralph and shepherd their scattered flock to a common home.

Some hope arose in 1950 when Bishop John O'Hara of Buffalo, NY invited the Cistercians to consider operating a diocesan high school. The Cistercians agreed to send Fr. Damian and Fr. Louis to Buffalo in January 1952 before a formal agreement had been signed. The hopes in Buffalo were dashed, however, when Bishop O'Hara was transferred to Philadelphia.

The mantle of the Abbey of Zirc began to weigh heavily on Frs. Louis and Anselm.

In 1953, most Hungarian Cistercians lived at the beautiful Our Lady of Spring Bank Monastery on Lake Oconomowoc in Okauchee,

Wisconsin, 30 minutes west of Milwaukee. Spring Bank had been founded by the Cistercian Order (often referred to that of “the Common Observance” to distinguish it from the Cistercian Order of the Strict Observance, also known as Trappists) in 1928. It was the first of many foundations (including ones in South America, Africa, and Vietnam) established by the Cistercians outside Europe during this period. While Spring Bank had succeeded in generating funds for the General House in Rome, it had struggled as a community.

From their perch in Rome, officials of the Cistercian Order believed the virtually homeless Hungarians would fit nicely into

the nearly vacant American facility.

But the Hungarians weren't so certain. They saw no prospects for a prep school in the sleepy resort town of Okauchee, Wisconsin or, for that matter, in Milwaukee, which already featured an elaborate system of Catholic schools feeding into Marquette University.

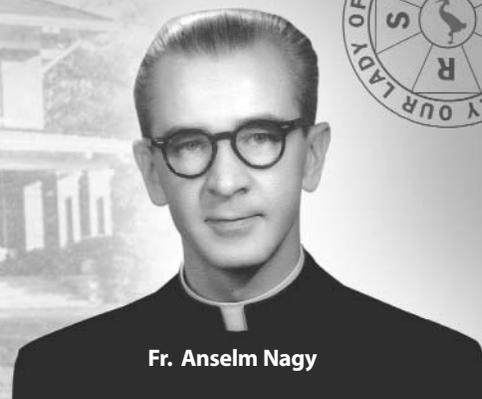
ASPHALT AND CARS STRETCHED AS FAR AS THE eye could see. Inside an unairconditioned car, four Cistercians sat pondering the treeless landscape and their decision to take a side trip to Texas. Their long hot drive from Mississippi to Fort Worth in late August 1953 had screeched to a halt on a two-lane highway about an hour east of their destination. Rush hour had traffic backed up around Dallas and the heat, which had been barely bearable at highway speeds, now enveloped them in a sweaty blanket.



Springbank



Fr. Louis Lekai



Fr. Anselm Nagy

For Fr. Benedict, Fr. Thomas Fehér, Br. Melchior Chladek, and Fr. Theodosius Demén, this sweltering afternoon introduced them to the Lone Star State.

Just days before, they had driven from Wisconsin to a Spring Bank mission church in Mississippi to see a newly ordained Cistercian, Fr. Berthold, celebrate his first Mass. The idea of adding North Texas to their itinerary had been suggested by Fr. Thomas, who had majored in geography back in Hungary. He suggested a route back to Wisconsin that would take them through Texas where they'd have a chance to visit Fr. George Ferenczy and Fr. Odo.

Fr. George had initially come to Texas in the summer of 1951 to attend a workshop and to visit a Hungarian friend from Budapest who was heading up the department of music at Midwestern University in Wichita Falls.

During the course of his visit, Fr. George became acquainted with several Sisters of St. Mary of Namur who were teaching at the local Catholic high school. They had big plans.

In the near future, the sisters hoped to establish a four-year, co-educational Catholic university in Dallas to replace their junior college, Our Lady of Victory in Fort Worth. In the meantime, they had invited Fr. George and Fr. Odo to begin teaching at Our Lady of Victory.

Fr. George, a dashing concert pianist with a Ph.D. in French Literature, had come to believe the sisters could actually make their grand dream come true.

For their part, the sisters saw the Cistercians' unexpected appearance on the prairie as pure Providence. The Sisters of St. Mary of Namur had been founded by a Belgian Cistercian named Joseph Minsart who had been driven from his monastery by the French Revolution. And, practically speaking, they must have wondered where else they were going to find a group of highly educated priests willing to join them in starting their new university.

As the sun mercifully began to set, the weary Hungarians found Fort Worth. Within an hour or so of their arrival, they were laughing and talking at Fr. Odo's favorite restaurant where they feasted on some unforgettable fried chicken.

Their harsh first impression of Texas softened slightly.

The next morning, Fr. Odo drove the visitors to the convent of the

**MUSIC TO HIS EARS**  
Fr. George Ferenczy's acquaintance with the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur eventually led to the Cistercians' settling in Dallas.

Sisters of St. Mary of Namur to see Fr. George.

"I can still remember walking up to the convent," recalled Fr. Melchior recently, "and hearing beautiful piano music coming from the basement." The Cistercians appreciated Fr. George's message even more than his music.

"When you go back to Spring Bank," Fr. George emphasized to the four travelers inside, "tell the fathers that this is the place where we should settle. They need educators and priests here and they would love to have us."

**T**HE FIST BANGING ON THE DESK BELONGED TO 34-year-old Fr. Benedict. The usually serene Fr. Benedict, who would chair the the University of Dallas physics department in a few years, was expressing himself in no

uncertain terms on this cold December 1953 afternoon in Wisconsin. Across the table sat Abbot General Sighard Kleiner. The newly elected abbot general had come to Spring Bank from Rome to conduct a canonical visitation, one of his first acts in his new job.

Fr. Benedict knew Abbot General Sighard rather well, having spent the latter part of 1950 and much of 1951 with him in Rome after his escape with the 12 student monks from Hungary. Kleiner had wasted little time in rubbing the Hungarians the wrong way.

"It seems an act of Providence that the Communists have closed your schools in Hungary," he told the junior monks as they arrived in Rome. "Now you can forget about teaching and truly become monks by concentrating on prayer and work." (By work, Kleiner meant manual labor.)

"Comments like these really got under our skin," recalled Fr. Melchior.

But this was the only kind of monasticism Kleiner recognized. He had, in fact, formed a reform monastery in Hauterive, Switzerland. It was from this Swiss abbey that he had been promoted and brought to Rome as procurator general.

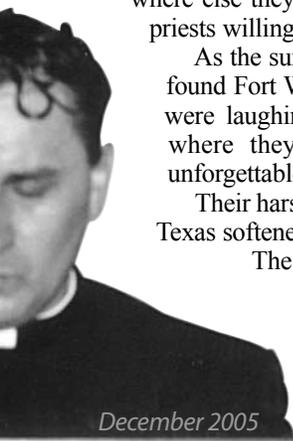
So in their meeting, Fr. Benedict found it difficult to contain his emotions, despite Kleiner's new rank as abbot general.

"Never in my life have I behaved so harshly with any of my superiors," recalled Fr. Benedict. "But he didn't listen to anyone."

The abbot general insisted that the monks at Spring Bank adhere to a schedule of prayers and agricultural work. Ph.D.s or no Ph.D.s, the monks at Spring Bank would not be allowed to teach; they would work in the fields.

**"I would spend the recess with the first graders ... I learned a lot of American speech from them."**

**— Fr. Benedict Monostori, on his first year teaching in Texas**



# Building a monaste

Kleiner probably believed that the refugee Hungarians would willingly acquiesce to his reform movement, just grateful to have a place to call home. Where else were they to go?

But Kleiner misjudged the Hungarians.

At the concluding meeting of the visitation, Abbot General Sighard addressed the Hungarian monks of Spring Bank. He didn't mince his words: it was his way or the highway.

The vast majority of the Hungarian Cistercians, both young and old, chose the highway.

Upon his departure, the abbot general left behind a set of statutes that dictated the lifestyle of Spring Bank. The abbot general included a clause that granted those unwilling to follow his demands permission to leave and to find a new home elsewhere.

Two months later, at a February 1, 1954 conventual meeting, the exiled monks asked the abbot general to appoint Fr. Anselm as their superior. They also decided to accept an invitation from Bishop Thomas K. Gorman, coadjutor bishop of the Dallas-Fort Worth Diocese (Bishop Joseph Patrick Lynch, who had served as bishop since 1911, lay ill in the last year of his life).

Fr. Anselm directed five priests – Fr. Damian, Fr. Benedict, Fr. Thomas, Fr. Lambert Simon, and Fr. Christopher Rabay – to move to Texas that summer to begin preparing the foundation for a monastic community based on the traditions of Zirc. The Cistercians were going to help the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur start a new Catholic university in Dallas.

“SHE MUST HAVE THOUGHT I SMELLED LIKE A BEAR,” wrote Fr. Damian of two gifts he received from his sister Barbara upon their first reunion in America in 1949, “because she bought me some shaving lotion and stick deodorant. My American civilization had begun.”

By the time Fr. Damian drove his Oldsmobile (a gift from his brother-in-law) to Dallas in the summer of 1953, he had been immersed in American society for over four years. He had leapt into a number of assignments in a variety of locations, anxious to refine his speech and to become familiar with American customs.

The other four transplants were not so lucky.

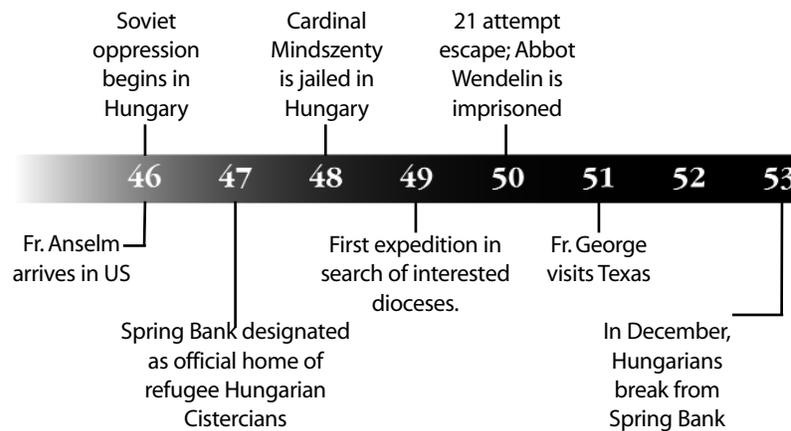
“You will do confessions on Saturday, two masses on Sunday, and then,” the pastor of St. Cecilia told Fr. Benedict at their first meeting, “we start school on Monday. You will teach two classes of religion.”

“But Monsignor,” Fr. Benedict said slowly, struggling just to communicate, “I don't speak English.”

“You will learn,” he answered.

“I would spend the recess with the first graders,” Fr. Benedict remembered. “They were always ready to chat and babble, and they didn't expect me to say much. I learned a lot of American speech from them.”

One day, the cook at St. Cecilia's, an African-American



woman, pulled Fr. Benedict aside at the refectory.

“I saw you on the street car yesterday,” she said. “You were sitting in the wrong section. Don't you know better?” (Later in 1955, Rosa Parks would refuse to give up her seat in the white section of a bus in Montgomery, Alabama.)

“I was thrown into the water,” Fr. Benedict acknowledged of those first years in Dallas. “It was sink or swim. It was exciting and I enjoyed it very much.”

Not all of the transplanted Hungarians, however, enjoyed the many challenges of assimilating into the American way of life. Unlike most of his brothers, Fr. Thomas was a reluctant émigré who had to leave Hungary or face a long prison term on drummed up charges of “anti-democratic propaganda.”

Fr. Thomas and Fr. Damian spent that first fall in Texas teaching at St. Edward's Academy for Girls.

“It was very difficult for him,” reflected Fr. Damian in 1969, “he really suffered, but at St. Edward's Academy, the girls were polite and well-disciplined. They did not take advantage of Thomas' poor English.

“Later when he was teaching in our preparatory school, he was lost amongst the boys; he became their fun priest. He was frightened of the students and was not capable of disciplining them.”

The Cistercians liked to enjoy themselves at monthly gatherings in Fr. Benedict's quarters at St. Cecilia's Parish (the only one

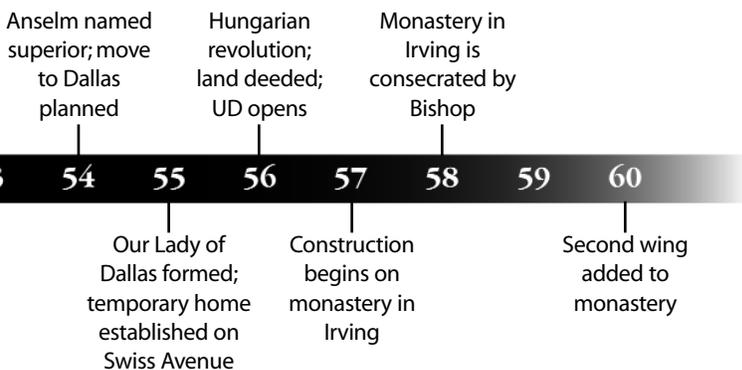


Photo courtesy of Solvia Regina, September 1955

## SWISS BLESSING

**Bishop Thomas K. Gorman consecrates the Cistercians' first chapel in Dallas, located in the library of Bishop Lynch's former home at 4946 Swiss Avenue, on May 19, 1955.**

# ry in the New World



of the bunch to have an air conditioned room). They played the traditional Hungarian card game of tarokk and talked before dining at The Torch, a well-known Greek restaurant located just blocks away on Davis. Then they'd return for more tarokk.

"We always had a glorious time," remembered Fr. Damian in his memoirs. "We were the first Cistercian 'torch' of this City. We had a lot of enthusiasm, strength, and love to burn."

The Cistercians were serving as priests and educators. All that remained was to gather the scattered under one roof so they could begin praying together as a monastic community.

**T**HE LIBRARY OF BISHOP Lynch's former home at 4946 Swiss Avenue was filled on a sunny Ascension Thursday, May 19, 1955. Priests, nuns, and laity had come to celebrate along with Bishop Gorman the promise that the Cistercians were bringing to the Diocese of Dallas-Fort Worth.

Bishop Gorman had made the house available for rent to the Cistercians a few months after Bishop Lynch's death in August 1954. Fr. Damian and Fr. Thomas had begun the process of cleaning it up and transforming it into a monastery, complete with a chapel in the exquisitely wood-paneled library.

Earlier in the day, Fr. Melchior had celebrated his First Mass, just two days after arriving in Dallas from Wisconsin and nearly a week after having been ordained at Spring Bank. He had chosen to wait until his arrival in Dallas to celebrate this special service.

At the open house that afternoon, the bishop blessed and inaugurated the monastery and chapel of the Cistercian Fathers of Dallas (as they called themselves at the time).

"From here, through your talents and spiritual endowment as a group and as individuals," he said, "there will flow forth into every corner of this diocese the spiritual character which you possess.

"It is a genuine source of satisfaction to know that here will be accomplished, day after day, the Holy Office of the Church in our behalf. We feel sure, too, that this will be a house of study, a center of scholarship, a place of learning."

"Your coming among us will be a blessing," he added. "As a result of your ministry, there will grow up a sturdier, a wiser, a more spiritual generation of priests, religious, and people in the Diocese

of Dallas and Fort Worth.

"Again, my dear Fathers, I bid you a thousand times, 'Welcome!'"

Gorman's remarks reflected both practical and personal aspects of the bishop's desire to invite the Cistercians to his diocese.

First, the Dallas-Fort Worth Diocese stretched from Lubbock and Amarillo to Texarkana. He needed priests to cover this gigantic territory adequately.

Second, a highly educated man who had earned degrees from The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., and at the University of Louvain in Belgium, Gorman understood the value of education. During his tenure, he built 25 new parochial schools, Bishop Dunne and Bishop Lynch high schools in Dallas, plus other high schools in Fort Worth, Tyler, and Wichita Falls, not to mention his role in the founding of the University of Dallas and Holy Trinity Seminary in 1965.

He also seemed to appreciate the Hungarians' talents, their promise, and their heartache.

"It is our hope that as your work grows and develops [here]," Gorman said, "it will in some measure recompense you for what must be and what will always be the pain of separation from your native homeland.

"We sincerely trust that God will again smile upon that country and bring to it peace and freedom, both civil and religious."

The next day, the monks began a full monastic schedule, living according to the ideals that Fr. Louis had first expressed nearly ten years before.

**"Your coming among us will be a blessing."**

— Bishop Thomas K. Gorman at the consecration of the chapel at 4946 Swiss Avenue, May 19, 1955

FOR THE REMAINDER OF 1955, Fr. Anselm worked to bring all the Hungarian Cistercians to Dallas under their new corporate identity, the "Cistercian Monastery Our Lady of Dallas" (which had been incorporated on March 25, 1955).

A little more than a month after the May celebration, Fr. Anselm received word that the Holy See had appointed him as the "Vicar (delegated superior) of the Abbot of Zirc" and given him jurisdiction

over all the monks of Zirc who were no longer in Hungary and did not belong to Spring Bank.

His new title would not make his work of uniting the scattered any easier. Some had firmly established their careers elsewhere by the time the community moved to Texas. Others wanted to wait and see whether the planned University of Dallas would materialize.

In the meantime, Fr. Anselm worked to raise funds and to secure land for a permanent monastery. The land negotiations took on special importance. The Cistercians were seeking a sufficient number of acres to accommodate their planned prep school – which all of the monks considered essential to preserving the legacy of Zirc.

Most of the other monks continued teaching or studying in preparation for their roles at the University of Dallas, which would open its doors in the fall of 1956.

While Texas may not have been their first choice as a home for the American incarnation of Zirc, they were needed here and they were determined to make it work.

"At the border in 1950," Fr. Benedict reflected, "I decided that where Providence leads me, that's where I will live and work. I will do my best there. I will be at home there."

"I never regretted settling in Texas," Fr. Benedict said. "It is still strange, but this makes it interesting and adds some spice to life."

Like that first fried chicken dinner in Fort Worth in '53.

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