



December 2015

# A LETTER FROM THE ABBEY



## Briefly

### 70th Anniversary

Fr. Ralph March celebrates 70 years as a priest. See pg. 3

### Cistercian Spirituality

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### Monastic Formation

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### Report from General Chapter

Fr. Abbot Peter gives an update from the Cistercian Order's General Chapter which took place this fall See p. 5

### Fr. Thomas on Vocational Discernment

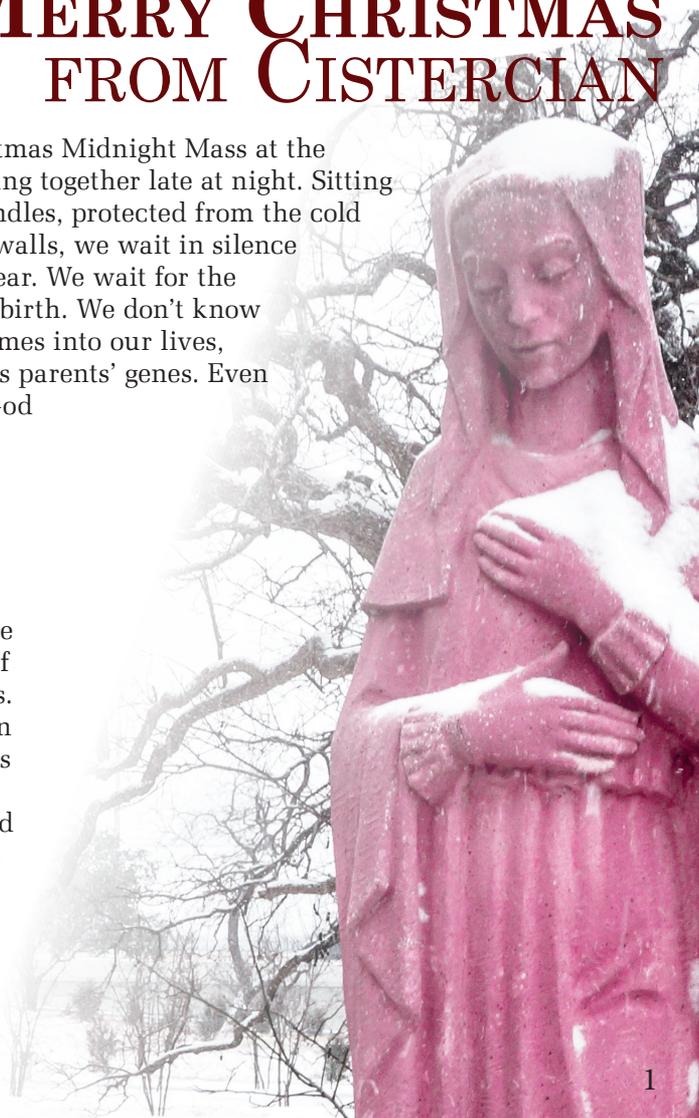
The Abbey's Vocation Director considers biblical examples of waiting for God's voice See pg. 6



## MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM CISTERCIAN

*A Letter from the Abbot*  
by: Fr. Abbot Peter Verhalen

Those who have attended Christmas Midnight Mass at the Abbey know the intimacy of praying together late at night. Sitting in the church lit only by a few candles, protected from the cold outside by the massive limestone walls, we wait in silence through the longest night of the year. We wait for the mysterious, intimate moment of a birth. We don't know how the precious human being comes into our lives, infinitely more than the sum of his parents' genes. Even less do we know how the Son of God was born of the Virgin Mary. The darkness of the night, however, induces us to become quiet, reflective, attentive – to listen for word of the Infant's birth, Today a Child is born to us. Today: In the darkness and quiet of the night, we also listen for the quiet entrance of the Infant entering our own hearts. This Advent and Christmas Season we will pray that our many friends open their hearts to Christ. Please pray for each one of us as well, and join us for Midnight Mass or Mass Christmas Morning.



# ST. BERNARD ON CHRISTMAS

by: Fr. Roch Kereszty



In his Sixth Homily for the Vigil of Christmas, St. Bernard suggests how we might best prepare for the Coming of Christ into our hearts.

He contrasts the newness of Christ with the novelties of this world. By always seeking what is new, we merely scratch our itch for more excitement, for more sensory or intellectual stimulation. Yet the more we scratch this itch, the worse it becomes. The more tired and empty and old we become. When we listen for the latest gossip, the most gruesome murder, for the daily rise and fall of presidential hopefuls, our soul actually begins to hurt, like the itch

we have scratched too hard. And the search for excitement just continues the next day.

On the other hand, the newness of Christ renews us and makes us young again. Even after they grew old in years, the saints exude a freshness, a contagious peace and serenity. The source of this newness is Christ who is being born in them. His immortal, risen life transforms their hearts and minds so that they come to look upon this world with his loving eyes and rediscover this world's beauty and goodness. They are firmly rooted in reality, not one day's sensational excitement, because the source and redeemer of all creation lives and works in them.

Christ longs to be born in each one of us. We only need to stop chasing after the wind, make a good confession, and create some empty space and inner solitude so that Christ can take up his home within us and make us anew.

## News from the Prep School

**Quiz Bowl Success** Fr. Gregory and Fr. Augustine have once again found success in the Quiz Bowl arena. As the faculty sponsors for the program, they run practice, organize the teams and lead trips around the region for tournaments. In an unprecedented season, the Quiz Bowl is sending three teams to nationals. Fr. Gregory said, "When we got the finalized results, the students, Fr. Augustine and I were ecstatic about an achievement we'd always hoped for but never accomplished – until now."



Some Prep School Quiz Bowlers

**Yearbook Honors** Exodus, the school's yearbook, has been honored by multiple journalism programs. Under the guidance of Fr. Anthony, the faculty sponsor, the book was given a First Class rating by the National Scholastic Press Association and a silver medal from Columbia Scholastic Press Association. A number of individual students also received awards from Interscholastic League Press Conference, a Texas-wide competition.



Fr. Anthony with some CPS Yearbook Students

**Pro Life Club:** On November 20th Fr. Ambrose and numerous students from the Prep School attended a Pro-Life breakfast. The event, which included a Keynote address from Fr. Mitch Pacwa, was just the latest event for the Pro-Life club. In January Fr. Ambrose will lead about 25 students and parent/chaperones to Washington, DC. for the March for Life.

If you are discerning a religious vocation and would like to discuss your calling with Fr. Thomas, Vocations Director, he can be reached at [fr-thomas@cistercian.org](mailto:fr-thomas@cistercian.org)

# THE NOVICE MASTER ON FORMATION

by: Fr. Ignatius Peacher

Formation, write the US bishops, is not equivalent to schooling or job training, but is foremost cooperation with the grace of God (*Program for Priestly Formation, PPF*).

To explain formation better, I have to use an image. I recently read *The Boys in the Boat*, the true story of the 1936 Olympic crew team that won the gold medal.

They were young men from working class families who only began to row as freshmen in college.

Through their hard work, and good coaching, they became excellent – one of the best eight oar crew teams ever to compete.

The goal of formation in the monastery is to cooperate with grace to become an excellent human being in God's eyes – one who continues the work of Jesus and loves with a heart like his.

More specifically, the formation



of a monk who will also be a priest involves human, spiritual, intellectual, monastic and priestly formation. The formation of a young man that enters the monastery is meant to shape him into a mature and virtuous human being, who is intimately in union with God.

Learning and attaining a deeper knowledge of the divine mysteries is meant to help the monk serve others and enrich his spiritual life. Intellectual formation in our monastery can also mean learning a secular subject to teach at our school and help the

monastery earn its living. Monastic formation molds the monk to pray, work, and live in a monastic community according to the Benedictine and Cistercian tradition. Finally, priestly formation should allow the monk to put on "the mind of Christ" and be a bridge through which God's grace comes to others.

## 70 years as a Priest Fr. Ralph March



On Sunday, May 3, 2015, the Cistercian community celebrated a mass in honor of the seventieth anniversary of the ordination to the priesthood of our own Fr. Ralph March. Over one hundred members of Collegium Cantorum, the group of choral singers Fr. Ralph assisted for many years, sang Renaissance polyphony under the direction of Ms. Marilyn Walker. A reception followed in the courtyard of the Abbey.

Fr. Ralph was ordained in the Cistercian Abbey of Zirc in Hungary by Bishop (later Cardinal) József Mindszenty on May 8, 1945, the same date as the Allied Victory in Europe. Today, he is the oldest member of the Cistercian Abbey Our Lady of Dallas and, after Monsignor Weinzapfel, the oldest priest in the Diocese of Dallas. In addition to serving as a priest, Fr. Ralph has had a long career as a teacher. In the early fifties, he taught French and Music at Marquette University. In 1956, he was called to Dallas and was among the founding members of Cistercian Abbey Our Lady of Dallas. He served on the first faculty of The University of Dallas teaching in the Music and French Departments. He also directed four choirs: The Dallas Catholic Choir, the Saint Bernard Chorus, the University Chorus, and the Madrigal Singers. With the permission of his abbot, Fr. Ralph accepted the invitation to serve for several years as the Music Director

of the Cologne Cathedral (1977-1987), and then as pastor in Landsberg am Lech in Germany (1987-2000). He returned to the Abbey in Dallas in 2000, when he resumed teaching at The University of Dallas.

Fr. Ralph has always loved both Gregorian chant and classical polyphony. Together with Marilyn Walker, he helped establish the Collegium Cantorum, an a cappella choir for men and women dedicated to classical polyphony. The Cistercian community is deeply indebted to both Fr. Ralph and to Ms. Walker for their inspiring commitment to sacred music, a passion that has enriched our liturgy and prayer at the Abbey for many years.



# THE GROWTH OF PRAISE

by: Fr. Stephen Gregg

The heav'ns are not too high,  
His praise may thither fly:  
The earth is not too low,  
His praises there may grow.

The church with psalms must shout  
No door can keep them out:  
But above all, the heart  
Must bear the longest part.  
—by George Herbert

A group of monks was invited by the Abbot several months ago to work together with a music instructor in order to improve and increase our community's use of the ancient Gregorian way of chanting. This group already leads the chants on some Sundays and other feasts,

as well as on first Fridays. This means, for example, singing the full introit, or entrance chant, along with its psalm verse, to draw us into the mass with the chanted words of Scripture, and then singing the communion antiphon at the beginning of communion with psalm verses chanted throughout the entire rite, as a way of guiding our minds and hearts as we receive the Eucharist and of giving voice to our thanksgiving. Gregorian chant's musical unity and simplicity, its freedom of rhythm, and its intimate relationship to the word of God and to the liturgy can lend our worship not just dignity but also the vibrant tranquility that is a goal of the monastic life.



## Donut Sunday



On Sunday Nov. 20th, the Feast of Christ the King, dozens of families stayed after mass for a donut or two. Despite the colder temperatures, most people stayed warm with a cup of coffee and fellowship.

About once every three weeks donuts and coffee are provided on the lawn in front of the Abbey Church.



# Catholic Foundation to honor Fr. Denis

by: Fr. Paul McCormick



Fr. Denis Farkasfalvy

For a lifetime of service and dedication to the North Texas Catholic community, the Catholic Foundation has recently named Fr. Abbot Denis Farkasfalvy as their 2016 Catholic Foundation Award recipient. Fr. Denis will be honored during The Catholic Foundation Award Dinner on Friday, Feb. 19, 2016 at the Hilton Anatole.

As the 34th recipient of the award, Fr. Denis' manifold contributions to the Cistercian Abbey and School in Dallas, to the Cistercian Order internationally, and to the larger Catholic community will be

highlighted with both a video and spoken remarks.

Everyone is invited to join Fr. Denis, Fr. Abbot Peter, the monks of the Our Lady of Dallas, and friends of both Abbey and School for what is certain to be a unique and memorable evening. Special guests will include Fr. Denis's sister and nephew from Hungary, as well as Archabbot Sixtus and Abbess Olga from the two Cistercian abbeys in Hungary.

If you would like to attend, please register on the Catholic Foundation website ([www.catholicfoundation.com](http://www.catholicfoundation.com)). Dinner will be served at 7:15 p.m., with cocktails beginning at 6:00.



Fr. John leads a tour for University of Dallas students at the Basilica Tre Fontane, the probable location of St. Paul's martyrdom.

## Fr. John assists UD in Rome

While he is in Rome, Fr. John continues to serve as an assistant chaplain for the students of the University of Dallas Rome program by leading tours, offering spiritual direction and celebrating the sacraments, both at the *Due Santi* campus outside Rome and during some of their trips to other cities in Italy and Europe.

Remarking on his time in Rome,

Fr. John said, "Studying the western tradition in such an intensely Catholic environment as Rome can be a powerful moment in the life of a college student. It is a privilege to serve so many well-meaning and open students at such an important stage of their lives."

In addition, Fr. John has continued his studies in Monastic Theology.

## REPORT FROM THE GENERAL CHAPTER

by: Fr. Abbot Peter Verhalen

Oct. 5-19 the superiors of more than 90 Cistercian abbeys and priories met outside Rome for the Order's General Chapter.

Though the Chapter is the chief governing body of the Order, the Abbot General challenged the abbots and abbesses to think of themselves as a family and to work during the two weeks on strengthening their relationships.

Part of that effort, as in any family, was simply to get to know one another better, one's hopes and fears, successes and challenges.

Most of the time was spent with reports on the various monasteries in the Order with their 3,500 men

and women in Vietnam, Ethiopia and Eritrea, Brazil, Bolivia, Canada, and the U.S. The only other American monastery is the thriving community of contemplative nuns at the Valley of Our Lady in Wisconsin.

In addition to fostering informal conversations over a glass of wine or a beer at the end of the day, the Chapter established mechanisms by which monasteries will be able to help one another financially.

Just as at the end of many a family reunion, most superiors were ready to return home but were also committing to one another to stay in touch through email, perhaps through visits, and certainly through prayer.



## Abbey Church Services

### UPCOMING EVENTS

**Christmas Eve Vigil Mass**  
Dec. 24th 11:30 pm

**Christmas Morning Mass**  
Dec. 25th 9:00 am

**New Years Eve Adoration**  
Dec. 31st 9:00 pm-12:00 am

### DAILY SCHEDULE

<b>Office of Readings &amp; Morning Prayer</b>	6 am
<b>Evening Prayer</b>	6 pm
<b>Daily Mass (Mon - Sat.)</b>	6:30 am
<b>Mass on Sunday</b>	9 am
<b>Confessions Wed.</b>	4-5 pm



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Fr. Bernard Marton, Fr. Roch Kereszty, Fr. Denis Farkasfalvy and Fr. Julius Leloczky pose for a picture outside the Homecoming auction tents.

## WAITING FOR GOD'S PLAN TO BE REVEALED IN OUR LIVES

by: Fr. Thomas Esposito



If you are a procrastinator, you might be surprised to learn that you have something in common with God. Several Old Testament prophets expressed frustration that God was taking so long to unfold His plan of salvation for Israel and the world. The prophet Habakkuk in particular uttered a complaining rant to the Lord, and presumably was not too consoled by the answer he received: "The vision [God's plan] still has its time, presses on to fulfillment, and will not disappoint. If it delays, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not be late. The rash man has no integrity, but the just man, because of his faith, will live" (Habakkuk 2:3-4).

These words of Habakkuk are read during Advent with reference to the manifestation of God's love in Jesus. While human logic accuses God of procrastination and fails to see why the Lord would delay the outpouring of His salvation, the logic of faith finds consolation in the simple fact that Christ did (and continues to) come into our world. Saint Paul speaks of the birth of Jesus as "the fullness of time" (Galatians 4:4; see also 2 Corinthians 6:2), because the hidden plan of God was finally and most perfectly revealed at that pivotal moment in history.

Just as the prophets of Israel longed to see

the day of salvation, so too our faith tells us that our own limited vantage point is not that of God. The patience required by Christ allows us to prove the genuineness of our faith, and generates (if we permit it) a calm reliance on the Lord's plan for us.

An essential aspect of faith, however, is vigilance, a readiness to recognize the moment in which God is actively seeking a response from us. The Gospel of Luke illustrates this recognition in a beautiful way. At various points in the narrative, the word "today" appears to indicate that salvation is present to a particular person or group of people. To Zacchaeus, the tree-climbing tax collector who welcomes Jesus with joy, the Lord says, "Today, salvation has come to this house" (Luke 19:9). The good thief hanging on the cross hears the consoling words "Amen I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). Most appropriate to Advent is the angelic annunciation to the shepherds: "I proclaim to you good news of great joy [...] Today, in the city of David, a savior has been born for you, who is Christ and Lord" (Luke 2:10-11).

As we wait upon the Lord in our own lives, let us pray for the ability to perceive the today of His will, that we may not procrastinate when the time to act comes.