



December 2019

A LETTER FROM THE ABBEY



Briefly

Travelogue

Fr. Bernard recounts his short trip back to Dallas and his return to Hungary, where he is serving as Prior to the Abbey of Zirc
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Carta turns 900

For three days in July, Our Lady of Dallas hosted dozens of monks and nuns from around the world
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Br. Francis in Rome

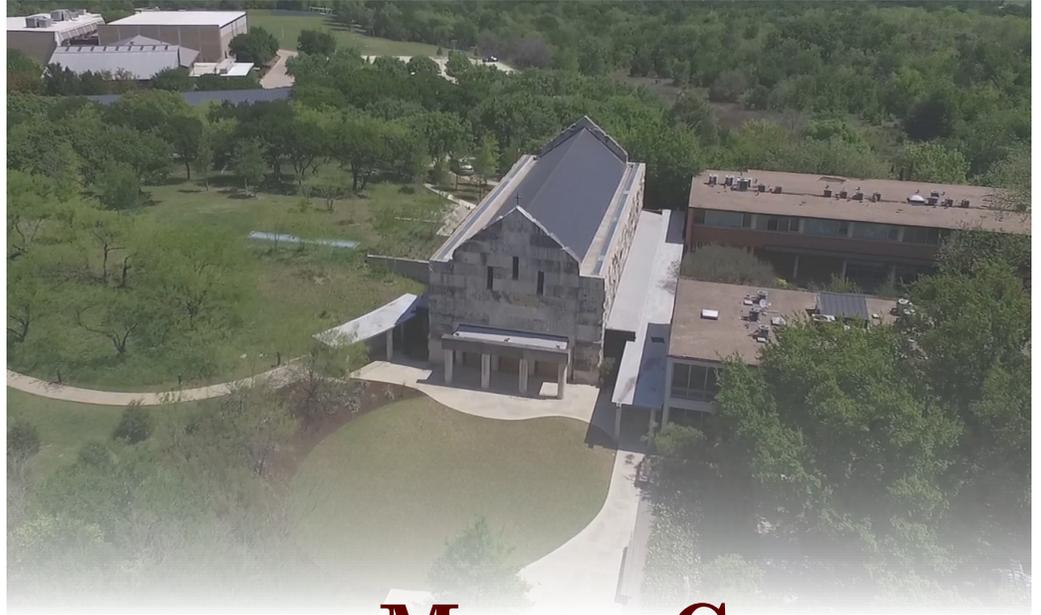
Br. Francis updates us on his Ph.D. studies in Rome
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Ordinations!

Fr. Raphael Schaner is ordained a priest and Br. Francis Gruber a deacon
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A trip out West

Fr. Peter joins Fr. Stephen for a quick trip to California for an abbatial installation
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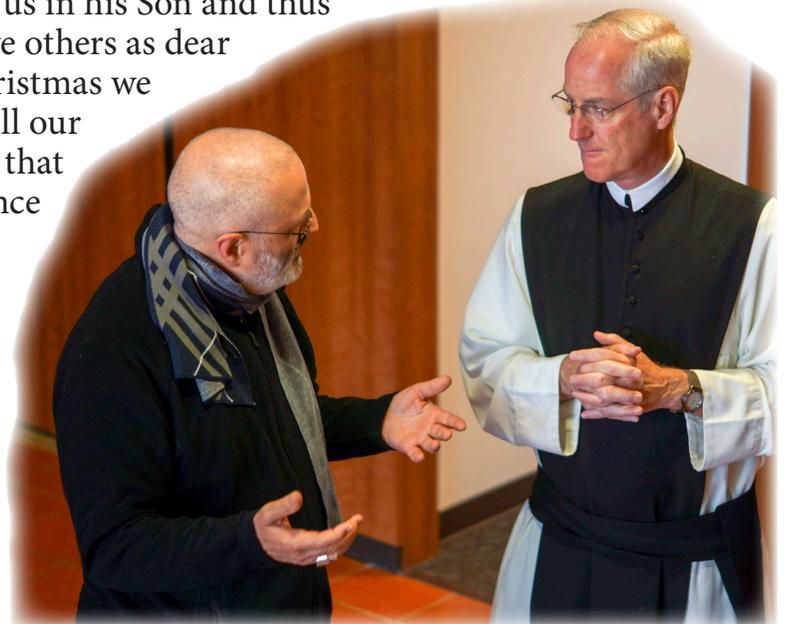


MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM CISTERCIAN

A Letter from the Abbot

Fr. Abbot Peter Verhalen

With a variation on 1 John 4:8, the Cistercian abbot St. Aelred of Rievaulx once wrote that “God is friendship.” Made in God’s image, we are made for friendship. Christmas reminds us that our longing to love and be loved, to experience friendship, is as basic as reality itself, as God. As a most intimate “friend,” God has shared our life, has walked with us in his Son and thus enabled us to love others as dear friends. This Christmas we give thanks for all our friends and pray that you will experience the joys of this profound friendship with God and with those in your lives.



Fr. Abbot Peter speaks with Abbot General Mauro at the Carta Caritatis Colloquium.

THE TRAVELS OF FR. BERNARD

Fr. Bernard Marton



This little report on Zirc might end up like a travelogue, yet I will include a few details since they form an essential part of what might be of interest to our Dallas friends.

My short visit to the monastery just flew by, and I thoroughly enjoyed my visits with members of the community and my longtime friends. Exactly two weeks after my arrival I was already on my way back to the old country, via Washington, D.C., where I officiated at the wedding of a Cistercian alumnus of 2004, Cart Weiland and his lovely wife, Carol Szurkowski at St. Peter's Church on Capitol Hill. Between rehearsal activities and the ceremony itself, I was shown around by another alum, Drew Roberts of '12, who happens to work in the Capitol and has clearance to most parts of the building. It was a lovely occasion and a mini-reunion.

Having finished with the wedding, I was on my way to the airport to catch a direct flight to Vienna with Austrian Airlines, cutting nearly half of my normal travel time to just eight hours thirty-two minutes. I was briefly (well, not so briefly, for nearly two hours) hassled as I tried to obtain my boarding pass, given the fact that my return back to the States was nearly ten months later.

Eventually, I arrived in Zirc and was heartily received by the small community, especially by Br. Nivard, our novice and newest member. I immediately re-started the lessons we interrupted when I left: I am teaching him Latin and English. Actually, it is Latin in English. We go over the grammatical constructions of mostly scriptural passages that we are daily reciting in the Divine Office.

Br. Nivard is an eager student who wants to learn everything, including

my fake Texas-accented English. His Hungarian accent is genuine (and rather strong) so any of our alumni who regret the disappearance of the Hungarian accent from the Prep School could hear him would be delighted. I am having a hard time switching from the classical pronunciation (that we use in the Prep School) to church Latin (mostly Italian pronunciation) and the peculiar Austro-Hungarian Latin of my childhood that I now find strange. Nivard is a wonderful, delightful student who satisfies my craving for teaching that I sorely missed the last couple of years while in Zirc. His presence is the reason I am here; his perseverance is the hope that a new bud will eventually bring forth yet another flowering tree as it has done numerous times from the Hungarian soil.

Of the six monks who reside permanently in the Abbey, four are capable of praying the full divine office, much of it chanting. There is plenty of work both in the parish and in the schools where unfortunately the Cistercian presence is sorely lacking. I have accepted numerous speaking engagements, retreats, days of recollections in the towns where our schools are located to show the colors. When doubting my own ability to perform any useful missionary work – as I feel very inadequate in promoting true spirituality – I was immensely helped by a statement of one of the teachers at St. Emery when she replied to my hesitation: “Father

it matters little what you say as long as it is you – a Cistercian in black and white habit – who says it.” They crave our presence. And I have actually preached on the topic of what it means to me to be present. Forgive me the quote that served as the launching pad: “The past is history, the future is a mystery, today is a gift of God – that’s why we call it present.”

After the nearly three hard years of purging and reconnecting, the community is relatively peaceful but especially hopeful. Abbot Bernát is an indefatigable workhorse who finds the energy to criss-cross the country several times a month, who has brought stability and foresight to the community. We now need more brother Nivards. Who knows, perhaps another wishful, Abbot Denis-style prayer will be answered just as when he prayed for the intercession of our sainted

predecessors: “If God sends us five good vocations in ten years, we shall survive!” We would not insist on duplicating our Dallas history of ten in five years but would be grateful for the literal five. Please do pray for us!





Carta Caritatis Colloquium: 900 years

Fr. John Bayer

Throughout this year, in 2019, Cistercian monks and nuns around the world are celebrating the 900th anniversary of the Carta Caritatis or “Charter of Charity” (1119), the document that formally gathered together the first Cistercian monasteries into a shared life and mutual responsibility. This document was so successful it was eventually embraced as that model by which the medieval Church asked religious orders to organize themselves at the Fourth Lateran Council (1215).

It remains a source of inspiration today.

From July 16-19, Cistercian Abbey Our Lady of Dallas hosted an international conference to discuss the Charter of Charity. Unique in several ways, this was the first time Cistercians and Trappists of North America gathered



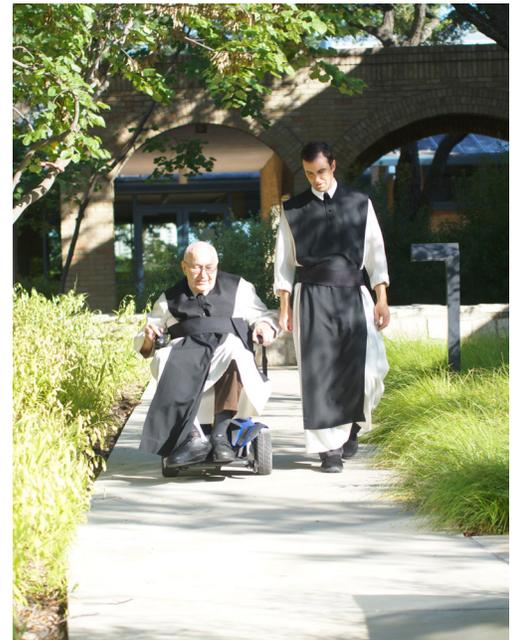
in such numbers. Among the guests were many monks, nuns and scholars from at least twelve countries, some as far away as Germany and Australia, as well as the general abbots of both the Cistercian Order (O.Cist.) and the Trappist Order (OCSO), the two leaders who are collectively responsible for over 7,000 Cistercian monks and nuns around the world.

The Charter of Charity receives its name in part from the intention of the Cistercian founders to ensure that the relationship between their monasteries would not be reduced to the economic relationship that existed at the time between medieval feudal estates and many other monasteries, according to which one house would

found another house for its own economic advantage. In writing the document, the

founders wanted to make clear “by what covenant” all the monasteries should be knit together.

The Charter enacted important systems of accountability between the monasteries: every year all the abbots would gather together to discuss relevant issues and hold each other accountable to



BR. FRANCIS REPORTS FROM ROME

Br. Francis Gruber

On the last day of September, I shipped off to commence my studies in Rome. Immediately upon arriving at the Cistercian General House, I was met with the warm greetings of Frs. Lluc from Poblet, Spain, and Cesare from Dominus Tecum, in Piedmont, whom I had gotten to know well years ago while studying here.

Within a few short days, I felt back to the comfort level of the home-away-from-home I had experienced when I spent the spring semester of 2017 here in Rome.



I am beginning a doctorate in philosophy at the Pontifical Gregorian University, which grew out of a school originally founded by St. Ignatius of Loyola himself in 1551.

I am one of eighteen other students from all over the world who were accepted in the doctoral program in philosophy. We are all part of a weekly seminar that covers the basics of how to conduct doctoral research, wherein all students must also give a substantial presentation on the status of their research, along with a critical discussion amongst the whole class that follows.

All in all, it has been a wonderful experience thus far, and I am very grateful to have this opportunity.

their commitments; and every year the mother house should visit her daughter house to ensure the material and spiritual well-being of its members.

Taking its inspiration from this sense of Christian solidarity in all things material and spiritual, the conference organized its presentations. There were seven lectures from different scholars, as well as presentations by Cistercian superiors on the current state of the two orders (Cistercians and Trappists) and a panel of younger monks and nuns about their hopes for the future legacy of the Carta.

The presence of lay scholars was a great aid to the conference, as their expertise and critical perspective increased the sophistication of the discussions. At the same time, the earnest and lively engagement of the monks and nuns (some of them scholars as well), made it clear that these days of study were not just of theoretical interest but of vital concern to the future of the Cistercian tradition and the personal growth of its members and those they serve. They were also days in which all the participants experienced the grace of a shared vocation. As one

Cistercian nun wrote, "Our time in Dallas was a GREAT blessing. Meeting all your brothers was wonderful. I hope everyone left the Colloquium with a bit more hope, joy, and love in their hearts. I certainly did. I cannot stop giving thanks to the Lord."



Ordinations and Vows

Fr. Thomas Esposito

August is traditionally a month of festivities for the monks, and 2019 was no exception. In addition to our annual community retreat and the excitement of a new school year, we also celebrated several milestone events in the lives of two of our young monks.

On August 14, Br. Francis Gruber made his solemn profession, pledging his “stability, the monastic way of life, and obedience” for life in the presence of Abbot Peter and the community. Fr. Roch, the Form Master of the CPS class of 2001, which includes Fr. Stephen, Fr. Lawrence, and Br. Francis, was among the monks who greeted the newly professed brother with the sign of peace. Having made his perpetual vows, Br. Francis headed off to Rome to pursue a doctorate in philosophy at the Gregorian University.

The following day, August 15, was the Solemnity of the Assumption of Mary into Heaven. His Excellency Edward

Burns, the Bishop of the Dallas diocese, ordained two of our brothers: Br. Francis to the diaconate, and his novice mate, Br. Raphael Schaner, to the priesthood. The Abbey church was too small to accommodate the great crowds of Cistercian students and their families, as well as nearly 100 members of the Schaner family from California, Fr. Raphael’s native state.

The church was full once again on Saturday, August 17, as Fr. Raphael celebrated his first Mass; the newly ordained priest asked Fr. Ignatius to preach and Br. Francis to serve as deacon. Fr. Raphael later reflected on the joyful events of these days, highlighting the beautiful link between his two families: “It dawned on me in the days leading up to the ordination that, while it takes a village to raise a child, it takes a Church to raise a priest. This was especially evident to me in the abundance of prayers and support both from my California family and from the extended Cistercian family.”



Abbey Church Services

UPCOMING EVENTS

Christmas Eve Vigil Mass

Dec. 24

Office of Readings: 11:30 p.m.

Mass: 12:00 a.m. Midnight

Christmas Morning Mass

Dec. 25 9:00 a.m.

New Years Eve Adoration

Dec. 31 9:00 p.m.-12:00 a.m. Midnight

DAILY SCHEDULE

Office of Readings

& Morning Prayer 6:00 a.m.

Evening Prayer 6:00 p.m.

Daily Mass (Mon - Sat.) 6:30 a.m.

Mass on Sunday 9 a.m.

Confessions Wed. 4-5 p.m.



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

Br. Matthew, Fr. Ignatius, and Br. Christopher recently traveled to Arkansas to pray with the Benedictines of Subiaco Abbey. They took a short hike through the Ozarks.



Travels to California for a new Abbot

Fr. Stephen Gregg

In September Fr. Peter and Fr. Stephen went to the California Delta around Sacramento to attend the abbatial benediction of Fr. Dominic Savio Trần Thiết Hùng. Fr. Dominic Savio, who has been in America for decades and has often visited our monastery, was elected abbot of his home community in Viet Nam, Châu Sơn Đôn Dương, but for practical reasons and because of his long work in this country, his abbatial benediction was held at Our Lady of Sacramento, the small community Fr. Dominic helped found a short distance from California's capital.

The Abbot General from Rome was present, along with many abbots from

Viet Nam and the United States, the emeritus bishop of Sacramento who presided at the founding of Our Lady of Sacramento fifteen years ago, and something like 1,500 lay people.

Fr. Peter and Fr. Stephen were also able to visit Sacramento and the Trappist monastery of New Clairvaux north of the city. The monks there had originally hosted Fr. Dominic and were instrumental in founding Our Lady of Sacramento. New Clairvaux recently completed the major project of building a new church around the ruins of a thirteenth-century Spanish Cistercian chapter house, which had been purchased by William Randolph Hearst but for decades lay abandoned in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park.