

ROCH KERESZTY:  
MASTER OF CISTERCIAN  
*RESSOURCEMENT*

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“Fr. Roch’s gentle manner was a living witness to Bernard’s distinctively Cistercian model of unifying the intellectual and affective paths to knowing Christ and serving his Church.”



I came to teach in the department of theology at the University of Dallas in 1991 at the age of twenty-eight. I remain today immensely grateful to the Cistercians for putting their trust in a virtually untested layman. I had already at that time published an essay in German on Hans Urs von Balthasar’s concept of the baroque, which undoubtedly caught the attention of the European-trained faculty, but there was still a considerable leap of faith involved in asking me to replace Fr. Robert Dionne, the recently deceased and erudite priest who had trained with David Tracy at the University of Chicago. Looking back, I now also wonder if Fr. David Balás, O.Cist., the chair of the department, had quietly set his sights on fashioning me into a novice for Our Lady of Dallas, the only full-fledged Cistercian Abbey in the United States.

In any case, my destiny was otherwise. I spent two wonderful years there and soon after my arrival began to discern the powerful triumvirate in Catholic theology that was to be found in that monastery in the persons of Fr. David, Fr. Roch Kereszty, and Abbot Denis Farkasfalvy (who had been elected as Abbot just three years prior and served in that position until 2012). This team made remarkable contributions to *Communio* (in both the English-speaking and Hungarian editions) and to ecumenical theology in the Dallas metroplex area.<sup>1</sup> Having been trained in Rome in an age of the renewal of both Church and monastic theology, all three pillars of this triumvirate brought sapiential riches to the newly formed University of Dallas.

Fr. David researched and taught the Fathers of the Church, and his masterwork *Metousia Theou* makes a powerful, albeit challenging case for the absence of a full-fledged analogy of being in the Christian Neoplatonism of Gregory of Nyssa.<sup>2</sup> During my years in Dallas, I audited his seminars on the Fathers and still keep those notes as the basis for my own lectures on that topic. Abbot Denis applied St. Bernard of Clairvaux's theology of the Incarnation to the doctrine of inspiration and thereby shed great light on the Council Fathers' taking recourse in *Dei Verbum* to the condescension of the Lord according to John Chrysostom.<sup>3</sup> Their joint efforts at the renewal of the global Church through intellectual labors undertaken in the monastery and university and through outreach to fellow travelers (such as the Dallas-based seminar on second-century Christianity, dialogues with Albert Outler, William R. Farmer, Bruce Marshall, etc.) have not yet been plumbed and merit significantly more attention than I can give them in this short essay.

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1. Dr. Stephen Maddux from the modern languages department at the University of Dallas served as an editor and translator for Fr. Roch and was equally hospitable to me in providing orientation to this new landscape of theology and intellectual life.

2. David Balás, O.Cist., *Metousia Theou: Man's Participation in God's Perfections According to Saint Gregory of Nyssa* (Rome: Pontificium Institutum S. Anselmi, 1966).

3. See Denis Farkasfalvy, O.Cist., *L'inspiration de l'Écriture sainte dans la théologie de Saint Bernard*, *Studia Anselmiana* 53 (Rome: Herder, 1964); and *A Theology of the Christian Bible: Revelation, Inspiration, Canon* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2018), esp. 73–86.

The founding of Our Lady of Dallas is itself a revealing story that must be recalled here even if older readers of *Communio* are already familiar with its main outlines.<sup>4</sup> The current structure of the church itself is built out of materials from a stone quarry in Texas, but the spirit that imbued those walls from its founding originated from the Cistercian motherhouse in Zirc, Hungary.<sup>5</sup> The Hungarian monastery was thriving with vocations and multiple schools before and during World War II, and the Soviet invasion that followed the war literally intruded in this life. In the eight-hundred-year history of their foundation, there were no previous large-scale attempts to send monks abroad. They were designed to be a Cistercian monastery in and for Hungary. Kereszty and Farkasfalvy were part of the exiled group that quietly left Zirc for Austria in 1956.<sup>6</sup> Fr. David also followed this corridor through the monastery of Stams, Austria, and arrived in Rome in 1950. There he received two licentiates at the Pontifical Athenaeum of Saint Anselm (also known as San Anselmo), one in philosophy and one in theology. In 1959, he joined the newly founded monastery of Our Lady of Dallas and began teaching philosophy and theology at the University of Dallas. In 1962, he was able to return to San Anselmo to defend his dissertation on the theology of participation in the works of St. Gregory of Nyssa and obtained his doctoral degree (STD) in theology.

The origins of the Cistercian arrival in Texas are well documented and demonstrate how the concerted vision of a few dedicated souls can help to build the Church amid great struggles on both sides of the ocean. Fr. Louis Lékai, O.Cist., who later became a well-published scholar of early Cistercian history, first floated the bold idea of leaving Hungary for the United States in a private letter to a confrere in 1945. Between 1949 and November 22, 1963, the date on which the Holy See conferred an

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4. What follows is based upon Abbot Denis Farkasfalvy, O.Cist., "The Cistercians in Texas: The Founding of Our Lady of Dallas," *Cistercians in Texas* (Carrollton, TX: Mix Printing Company, 1998), 18–49.

5. On the Cistercian spirit of this church building, see Thomas Pruitt, "A Cistercian Church in Dallas," in *Cistercians in Texas*, 105–12 (based upon a thesis by Pauline Hager); and Gary Cunningham, "The Architecture of Cistercian," in *ibid.*, 112.

6. Farkasfalvy, "The Cistercians in Texas," 43.

independent status to the Abbey in Dallas and the fateful day of the assassination of John F. Kennedy in Dallas, there were many twists and turns.

Continuing in the Cistercian apostolate of education is arguably the most important thread. The Cistercians were early collaborators with the Sisters of Mary of Namur in Fort Worth, who in 1955 revived the preexisting 1910 charter held by the bishop of Dallas to start a new Catholic university.<sup>7</sup> The arrival of the Hungarian Cistercians in Dallas after an initial stay in Wisconsin was precipitated by the promise to participate in a new university. Negotiations had to be undertaken with the bishop of Dallas and with the Cistercian authorities, now based in Austria and Switzerland, to establish the new foundation. Eight Cistercians were thus part of the original faculty. Lékai lobbied for full support from the Abbot of Zirc for a new, independent foundation, but the idea of being transplanted from a Hungarian Cistercian mode of life to the new soil of the United States was initially viewed with great suspicion, even by some of those who had already migrated. Abbot Wendelin wrote to the new transplants in 1948: "Not for a minute should you forget the *finis specialis* of our congregation, which consists of an educational apostolate."<sup>8</sup> The first abbot, Fr. Anselm Nagy, who also served as a professor of mathematics at the University of Dallas, is credited by Farkasfalvy with exercising prudence, patience, and a good measure of diplomatic skill in allowing Lékai's original vision to come to fruition.

Fr. Roch was born in Budapest on February 6, 1933, to a father who was a decorated army officer and a mother who was a biology teacher. Life at home was not easy, and, after reading the book of Jeremiah at the age of fourteen, he decided to become a priest.<sup>9</sup> Cistercians had been in Hungary since 1182 (eleven years

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7. Sr. Lois Bannon, OSU, "The University of Dallas," *Handbook of Texas Online*, Texas State Historical Association, 1976, available at <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/university-of-dallas>. Dr. John Sommerfeldt, the fourth president, was an expert in Cistercian history. See also Farkasfalvy, "The Cistercians in Texas," 25–41.

8. Farkasfalvy, "The Cistercians in Texas," 36.

9. I am grateful to Fr. Abbot Peter Verhalen for his funeral homily, from which some of these anecdotes are taken. The video is available online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZnabB6R9RXs>.

before Bernard's death), and this abiding and widely disseminated presence left its impact on the young Kereszty.<sup>10</sup> With the help of his Cistercian teachers in Budapest, whose own school had been nationalized by the Communist regime in 1948, he left the capital with the hope of entering the Cistercian Abbey of Zirc.<sup>11</sup> In 1950, the regime arrested the Abbot of Zirc, Wendelin Endrédy, and forced one hundred of the Cistercian monks to give up the habit and relocate. Fr. Roch himself remembers his pride at the fact that "the Jesuits and Cistercians were the main enemies of the regime."<sup>12</sup> To his chagrin, the monastery in Zirc was also closed by the Communist government, and Fr. Roch's initial formation took place in the woods nearby in secret meetings of an "underground" novitiate. These meetings had to take place away from the authorities for fear of persecution, as even his novice master was tortured. Like with the young Karol Wojtyła in Poland, theology taught underground became the initial furnace in which the spiritual iron of belonging to the Church was forged.

Fr. Roch escaped from Hungary to Rome with other Cistercians after the failed uprising in 1956 against the communists. The dissent began when university students in Budapest called upon the populace to demand free elections and the end of Soviet domination but ended after twelve days with an invasion ordered by Khrushchev, thousands of Hungarians killed and wounded, and the flight from Hungary of a quarter-million Hungarians. Fr. Roch was then ordained to the priesthood in Sankt Pölten, Austria, on October 2, 1960, and preached at his first Mass in a small Austrian village on the fitting verse: "My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work" (Jn 4:34, RSVCE). He went to Rome to obtain a doctorate in theology at San Anselmo and published a dissertation in 1963 entitled *Die Weisheit in der mystischen Erfahrung beim hl. Bernhard von Clairvaux* ("Wisdom in the mystical experience of

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10. Farkasfalvy, "The Cistercians in Texas," 21.

11. "Little-Known Facts: Fr. Roch Kereszty," *The Cor Chronicle*, November 15, 2018, available at <https://thecorchronicle.com/2018/11/15/little-known-facts-fr-roch-kereszty/>.

12. *Ibid.*

Saint Bernard of Clairvaux”).<sup>13</sup> Alongside studying St. Bernard at San Anselmo, he also experienced the opening of the Second Vatican Council firsthand in Rome, which also came to define the contours of his mature theology. One could say that San Anselmo influenced the theology of the council. For example, Fr. David recounted to me personally how deeply the lectures of the liturgical scholar Cipriano Vagaggini, OSB, shaped his thinking. Fr. Roch’s experience in Rome was no doubt just as formative. One might think of the simultaneous immersion in the academic study of the writings of St. Bernard and the opening of a council that promised renewal for the Church and the world through a return to the sources as the two wings that allowed Fr. Roch’s theological career to soar.

In the same year as the publication of his dissertation, Fr. Roch moved to the new monastery that Hungarian Cistercians had founded in Dallas, Texas, and served there as master of novices and as a professor at the University of Dallas. He was soon recalled from the university by his abbot and assigned to teach at the preparatory school, a task that reinvigorated his publications with youthful insights and continued unabated until 2019. This school was a school of learning for the Cistercian theologian. Whereas the contemplative Thomas Merton, a former bohemian from Columbia University, gripped the entire world from the Abbey of Gethsemani in Kentucky with his robustly Trappist voice, Fr. Roch, the teenager who fled Budapest to Zirc in the spirit of the prophet Jeremiah, wrote Catholic theology for the entire world with the experience of teaching the faith to young men at a Cistercian preparatory school inscribed in his heart. Without detracting in any way from the seriousness of Merton’s conversion at Columbia University and the genuine gift it bequeathed to the Church, Merton’s preconversion libertinism while living in Europe and New York City is the perfect foil to the mortal danger that the young Cistercian novices were facing behind the Iron Curtain. Fr. Roch also faced a radical conversion, but it was a radical conversion to the seemingly more mundane task of bringing the Cistercian charism of monastic education to Texas. Irving, Texas, likewise became Kereszty’s Abbey of

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13. Roch Kereszty, *Die Weisheit in der mystischen Erfahrung beim hl. Bernhard von Clairvaux* (Malle, Belgium: Abdij der Trappisten der Westmalle, 1963).

Gethsemani. The Cistercian ideal of a *novum monasterium*, a renewed monastery (with a Cistercian gift for renewal being extended to the Church as such), encompasses and surpasses both ends of this spectrum of conversions.<sup>14</sup> In Irving, Fr. Roch continued the historical Cistercian mission of participating in a school by forming the Christian hearts of young men about to enter professional life in the metroplex. His journey, however, did not end at the school. Fr. Roch later returned to the university, serving there as a professor and university chaplain for decades and taking on students not affiliated with either institution for spiritual direction.

#### “ST. BERNARD, A TEACHER FOR OUR AGE”

In this memorial, I will focus on three interlocking writings by Fr. Roch on the exemplarity of St. Bernard: “St. Bernard. A Teacher for Our Age (1990),” “St. Bernard’s School of Spirituality” (drawing upon earlier works but first published in this form in 1998), and “‘Bride’ and ‘Mother’ in St. Bernard” (originally written in 1993 and then reprinted in 2021). The three essays were written almost thirty years after he completed his doctoral dissertation on Bernard and appeared in print at different points throughout his career. They reflect the maturation of his theology around 1990, and their inclusion in later works validates their value as roadmaps, as it were, to a key dimension of his thought as a whole. Together they mutually illuminate his commitment to bringing Cistercian insights directly from the founder into a living conversation with contemporary theology and the contemporary Church.

The essay from 1990, “St. Bernard. A Teacher for Our Age,” was published several times but encapsulates the core of Fr. Roch’s message regarding the timeliness and urgency of a recovery of the theology of St. Bernard today.<sup>15</sup> There, Fr. Roch

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14. See Denis Farkasfalvy, O.Cist., “The Biblical Spirituality of Early Cîteaux,” in *Cistercians in Texas*, 84–94.

15. The original form of the essay appeared as “The Relationship between Anthropology and Christology. St. Bernard: A Teacher for Our Age,” in *La dottrina della vita spirituale nelle opere di San Bernardo di Clairvaux: Atti del Convegno Internazionale, Roma, 11–15 settembre, 1990*, Analecta Cisterciensia 46

refers to Christology in its twofold relationship to God and to the dignity and evolving mystery of the human person as “the focal point of the Bernardine synthesis.”<sup>16</sup> At its core there is a conviction here that runs parallel to Farkasfalvy’s discovery through Bernard of the flesh of Christ as the hermeneutical key to *Dei Verbum*. God’s self-emptying into the flesh of humanity stands at the center of the drama of salvation history that Bernard wishes to recount anew and that makes his work so vital for contemporary theology and the Church of today. The encounter with the flesh of the Word is not only intended for spiritual beginners, according to Bernard. Its abiding significance, seen from the standpoint of the glorified Christ, points to a broader program for introducing Bernard’s spiritual vision into contemporary Christology: “[Bernard’s] love for the body echoes the love of God who wants to unite even the lowest of creatures with himself and thus imbue it with divine life and eternal value.”<sup>17</sup> Bernard’s love for the body is genuine and timely but does not end with an accommodation to a mentality drawn from secular culture. On the contrary, Bernard elevates the Christian vision of the body beyond both modern Gnosticism and the cultural materialism of postmodernity.

This essay contains lasting insights for Christology today but has to be read with a certain caution. Written over thirty years ago and originally delivered as a talk in Rome, Fr. Roch addresses many specific problems in modern Christology and broaches the positions of multiple contemporary schools of thought. His engagement with a “Christology from below” or “process thought,” for example, strikes me as very relevant for

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(Rome: Editiones Cistercienses, 1990): 271–99. It also appears as an appendix to the revised and updated edition of 2002, but it is not found in the first edition of 1991, which was edited by Stephen Maddux. A second edition came out in 1997. In this essay I am citing from the following version: Roch A. Kereszty, O.Cist., “The Relationship between Anthropology and Christology: St. Bernard, A Teacher for Our Age,” in *Jesus Christ: Fundamentals of Christology*, 2nd ed. (New York: Alba House, 2002), 454–84. On Bernard’s place in medieval Christology, see *Jesus Christ: Fundamentals of Christology*, 251–56. This historical material is also found in the first edition.

16. Kereszty, “The Relationship between Anthropology and Christology,” 455–56.

17. *Ibid.*, 484.



the debates unfolding for the first time in a European context in the 1980s but perhaps not as timely today given the current debates in Christology.<sup>18</sup> I will focus instead on certain currents that Fr. Roch highlights and show how Bernard's approach to addressing these themes opens up, in Kereszty's view, new perspectives on the person and work of Jesus Christ.<sup>19</sup>

The essay responds to a challenge emanating in the English-speaking world in the 1980s and early 1990s from Karl Rahner and other defenders of a transcendental Christology of a correlation between christological teaching and the individual and global course of human development. The overarching goal adopted by Fr. Roch is to show the correlation between Bernard's developmental account of the stages of entering the mystery of Christ and the spiritual and cosmic development of humanity.<sup>20</sup> The brief account found in "The Relationship between Anthropology and Christology" is a condensed version of the systematic account found in *Jesus Christ: Fundamentals of Christology*.<sup>21</sup> He starts with the misery of the human person as a result of the threefold alienation from self, from fellow human beings, and from God. He then turns to the total gift of God to us in Christ and the descent of the Word into human flesh. What happened once in salvation history unfolds its effects every day in the human soul. In descending to human flesh, the sinless Word is also in solidarity with all sinful flesh.<sup>22</sup> Descent and ascent are two sides of the same coin. The ascent of the Word, which begins in the Resurrection, is completed in his Ascension and at

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18. There is a curious chapter on extraterrestrial intelligent beings in the first edition, which is elevated to a full chapter in the 2002 edition. If I recall correctly, Fr. Roch told me that this chapter was added after teaching Christology to students in a local community college, who convinced him that Christian theology needed to respond to this challenge. Recent developments in both science and theology have shown that need to be real.

19. See also the summary of the proposal in *Jesus Christ: Fundamentals of Christology*, written four years after its initial publication, contained in Roch A. Kereszty, O.Cist., "Toward a Contemporary Christology," in *Crisis in Christology: Essays in Quest of a Resolution*, ed. William R. Farmer (Livonia, MI: Truth, Inc., 1995), 333–49.

20. Kereszty, *Jesus Christ: Fundamentals of Christology*, 505.

21. *Ibid.*, 327–53.

22. See Kereszty, "Toward a Contemporary Christology," 344.

Pentecost. The sinner does not flee to the mercy of the Word without the acquisition of self-knowledge and self-love that is made possible by the prior act of love on the part of the Word. The mystery of redemption is much greater than ransoming a soul from the devil. It also includes liberation, satisfaction, and sacrifice. Against Peter Abelard, Bernard defended the necessity of being redeemed by Christ and thus asserted the fallacy of any pretense of self-redemption.<sup>23</sup> The Ascension of the Lord is the final, critical step in Bernard's view because it prefigures analogically the spiritual ascent of the soul to God. The perfect soul who ascends into heaven does not, however, forget the mysteries of the earthly life of Jesus. No longer alienated by sin, her prayer life is buttressed by a humble but intense self-awareness of the beauty and truth that God has invested in her. The union with the spouse is thus complete.

This account of the Bernardine pattern of redemption is not altogether new, but there are still nuggets of spiritual gold hidden in its unassuming prose. For example, Fr. Roch states, "Bernard offers both the shock and the comfort of an eschatological humanism."<sup>24</sup> It captures well the paradoxical impact that St. Bernard's thought is expected to have on contemporary Christology, being at once jarring and affirming. Secular humanism promises to exalt the gifts of humanity as such that are found uniquely within each person. Eschatological humanism in the monastic vision of St. Bernard is just as committed to eliciting and affirming these gifts but also posits a vision beyond death in which the gifts are shared and will be "all in all."<sup>25</sup> In heaven, both natural and supernatural gifts will be possessed in a communion of gifts. The pointlessness of Nobel Prizes and Academy Awards will finally be self-evident to all.

A strong point in "St. Bernard. A Teacher for Our Age" concerns the universality of salvation made visible in and through the person of Christ. Neither Bernard nor Fr. Roch teaches

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23. On the contrast between Bernard and Abelard, see Kereszty, "The Relationship between Anthropology and Christology," 468–69.

24. Kereszty, "The Relationship between Anthropology and Christology," 484. The same argument also figures into the concluding section of *Jesus Christ: Fundamentals of Christology*, 424.

25. Kereszty, *Jesus Christ: Fundamentals of Christology*, 425.

universal salvation as such. The point here is drawn rather from modern thinkers such as Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and Karl Rahner who do not see the scope of Christ's offer of salvation as limited to a small group of the elect. The vision of the cosmos itself, in both its material and spiritual dimensions, is changed in light of the goodness of God's self-revelation in the person of Jesus Christ. Bernard's approach to this topic is not directly touched by a world that knows modern evolutionary science. His view of the scope of Christ's offer is nonetheless cosmic because he recognizes the limitlessness of the love of God that is poured into the work of salvation and that is found microcosmically in the rightly ordered dynamics of human freedom.

Another illuminating point is Bernard's broad notion of redemption from sin, which starts in the threefold alienation and ends with the assumption into trinitarian communion. He defended the poor with the same evangelical ardor as today's social justice advocates.<sup>26</sup> As Fr. Roch says, "Bernard also provides a neglected perspective for liberation theology."<sup>27</sup> He is thinking first and foremost how Cistercian spirituality and Latin American liberation theology can both draw upon the *vita apostolica* and sharing of goods practiced by the early Church.<sup>28</sup> Thomas Merton once said that the monastery is the only place on earth where the ethical ideals of communism might be realized. Fr. Roch finds in Bernard not only a more sober rendition of this sentiment but also the hope that the Cistercian realism regarding the liberating exemplarity of the ascetical community could spill over into the sinful and tainted wider society.

Unbeknown to Fr. Roch, Gustavo Gutiérrez, the spiritual father of liberation theology, seems to have taken a portion of this lesson to heart when he first delivered talks on the spirituality of liberation in 1982. In an essay published in 1982, he writes,

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26. It is not at all surprising that the Cistercians hired Fr. Enrique Nardoni to join the department of theology at the University of Dallas. His posthumously published *Rise Up, O Judge: A Study of Justice in the Biblical World*, trans. Sean Charles Martin (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), is a classic example of a clear-eyed commitment to the social teachings of Christian revelation.

27. Kereszty, "The Relationship between Anthropology and Christology," 483.

28. *Ibid.*

In treating spirituality, one has to know that you “drink from your own well,” as Bernard of Clairvaux used to say. The historical point of departure of following Jesus is within our own experience. This is our well, the water that bursts forth from him cleanses us of old aspects of our way of being Christian, but at the same time fertilizes new terrains.<sup>29</sup>

He cites as his source a book published in 1943 by Étienne Gilson on the theology and history of spirituality.<sup>30</sup> In the same year, Gutiérrez published *Beber en su propio pozo*, his first attempt at a spirituality of liberation. The publication was issued before the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith investigated his work and liberation theology more generally, which resulted in a general agreement between the Peruvian theologian and the prefect of the congregation about the principles for a theology of liberation.

The epigram to that work is taken from the same passage in Bernard (and is quoted not only as the translated title but also in the frontispiece in its original Latin). Below I quote and translate the full passage, underlining the shorter segment included by Gutiérrez in his epigram:

Non ergo sapiens, qui sibi non est. Sapiens sibi sapiens erit:  
et bibet de fonte putei sui primus ipse.<sup>31</sup>

The wise one who is not wise for and to himself is not wise. The wise one will be wise [only] if he is wise for and to himself. Therefore, let him [who wishes to be wise] be the first to drink from the fount of the well that is his very own.

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29. Gustavo Gutiérrez, “Beber en su propio pozo,” *Mensaje* 316 (January–February, 1983): 16.

30. Étienne Gilson, *Théologie et histoire de la spiritualité* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1943), 20, as cited in Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Beber en su propio pozo: en el itinerario espiritual de un pueblo*, 8th ed. (Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme, 2007), 13.

31. Citing Bernard of Clairvaux, *De consideratione*, bk. 2, chap. 3, 745D. The English edition from which this Latin epigram is taken is Gustavo Gutiérrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells: The Spiritual Journey of a People* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1984), vii. See *ibid.*, 138n4 for the full citation from Bernard and Gilson. In the original Spanish, the subtitle indicates that the well of experience is drawn from while on the journey. The English subtitle seems to identify the journey itself with an undefined concept of experience, further distancing the metaphor from its Cistercian roots.

The complete citation from Bernard shows that the context for this leitmotif is Bernard's sapiential redirection of the human soul, which lies at the center of Fr. Roch's essay on Christology and anthropology in *St. Bernard*. Gutiérrez's usage of it to identify the spiritual itinerary of a people seeking to be liberated from injustice and poverty is a new reading of this text. As Fr. Roch himself underscored, Bernard decried modern individualism and lifted up the same gospel of the poor that liberation theology preached. Bernard also decried unjust structures in the Church not in accord with Christ's Gospel. Fr. Roch and Gutiérrez still find themselves in different places in the history of twentieth-century Catholicism, even though they are both in love with Bernard's spirituality. Different emphases *must* emerge given their different social locations. After all, Fr. Roch is an émigré from a monastery expropriated by communists. His point is not to move too quickly from the itinerary of the individual soul, the difficult path of self-examining one's own sin, and the joyous rewards of following Jesus to his incarnate presence at the right hand of the Father before drawing out the social consequences of the Gospel. With that realistic caveat, the full contours of Gutiérrez's Cistercian *ressourcement* come more closely in accord with what Fr. Roch is proposing.

A final issue concerns the feminist criticism of traditional, male-centered Christology. Fr. Roch insists that "today's feminist theology needs Bernard's perspective."<sup>32</sup> What does he mean by this? What aspect of the feminist critique is he targeting and how can the wisdom of St. Bernard respond to these charges?<sup>33</sup> In the feminist critique, Christ is not only male but the male language brings with it relationships that inhibit, or do violence to, women—relationships that involve power, domination, patriarchy, and paternalism. The bridegroom that romances the soul, at least according to Bernard's *Supra cantica*, has none of

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32. Kereszty, "The Relationship between Anthropology and Christology," 482–83. The feminist critique of the Christian mysteries and Fr. Roch's response to it is found in his *Jesus Christ: Fundamentals of Christology*, 349–58, which also draws upon the feminine language for God in Bernard.

33. Fr. Roch takes the articles written by Fr. Francis Martin in the early 1990s in the pages of *Communio: International Catholic Review* to be "a reliable survey and critique of Feminist theology" (Kereszty, *Jesus Christ: Fundamentals of Christology*, 512).

those traits. Bernard does not simply omit or overlook the patriarchal side of maleness. Fr. Roch's point is that Bernard (like Louis Bouyer would also maintain in the twentieth century) sees the feminine archetype as bride, virgin, and mother as the only path for humankind to come to its perfection as a free and highly desirable partner of God.<sup>34</sup> In fact, "[Bernard] points out that free self-determination is the very essence of human nature, and the image of God in us."<sup>35</sup> The crucible of finite freedom in Bernard does not allow men or women to ignore their sinful desires for self-aggrandizement, but it also prohibits the external imposition of another human will that keeps the soul from welcoming at once its freely chosen self-fulfillment and the fulfillment of its yearning for God.

#### "ST. BERNARD'S SCHOOL OF SPIRITUALITY"

"St. Bernard's School of Spirituality" was composed in 1998 for a general audience of lay, nonacademic people. It attempts to synthesize the aspects of St. Bernard's Christian spirituality that might resonate with the laity of today and deepen their spiritual journeys.<sup>36</sup> But the whole essay, which is described by Kereszty as only an hors d'oeuvre of spirituality rather than a full meal, is organized around the metaphor of a school: St. Bernard as teacher, the school of Christ, the school of humility, our worth in God's eyes, and the school of magnanimity. In other words, Fr. Roch, whose mettle as a teacher had been tested for decades at the preparatory school, realizes that Bernard's "school" is ultimately confined by neither the walls of the monastery nor the

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34. Kereszty, "The Relationship between Anthropology and Christology," 483.

35. *Ibid.*, 480.

36. Roch Kereszty, O.Cist., "St. Bernard's School of Spirituality," in *Cistercians in Texas*, 103n1. (This essay is reprinted in this issue of *Communio*.) He states that three paragraphs of this essay summarize parts of two other essays published in the early 1990s, one of which is examined below: "'Bride' and 'Mother' in the *Super Cantica* of St. Bernard: An Ecclesiology for Our Time?" *Communio: International Catholic Review* 20, no. 2 (Summer 1993). I myself, however, could not find any material overlap, but the admission nonetheless points to the remarkable continuity of vision in his overall theological and pastoral project.

doors that lead in and out of an adjacent high school. The school in which Bernard beckons our contemporaries to enlist is the very school of Christ himself, which Fr. Roch identifies with the *vita apostolica*.<sup>37</sup> No isolated doctrines separated from this commitment to “register” immediately with the community of the Apostles reverberate in the soul. With that enrollment of our own self, we too can carry the sweet yoke and the light burden of Christ. Fr. Roch writes, “It is the love of Christ alone that can teach us, the love which shares in Christ’s own love that makes the soul fly and not feel the burden.”<sup>38</sup>

The apostolic school started by Christ himself teaches humility. Without humility we would be lost. In a move that is quintessentially medieval but also foreshadows the Protestant Reformation, humility for Bernard entails receiving the power and the light of the Word of God. The power of the Word speaks as an inner voice within the desert of the human soul. A human aversion to contrition plugs the ears of the soul, but the power of the Word still offers forgiveness to the soul that is willing to unplug. The light of the Word enlightens conscience and thereby opens a door to self-examination. This enlightenment of the self is essential for love of neighbor and for the circulation of grace in the soul. “No true compassion and therefore no true love of neighbor are possible without accepting the reality of our own misery.”<sup>39</sup>

Human dignity results from God’s love for us. Through humility, we are brought back to a clearer image of the God within us and with that awakening in turn to a freedom to be loved by God. The modern secular model of human dignity focuses on an empowerment that always tries to match God’s initiative of love with a modicum of self-initiated human merit. This is not the way of St. Bernard. Bernard teaches us to think about “the connubial image” that expresses complete surrender to Christ.<sup>40</sup> The recognition of the love of God in the soul brings not only the possibility of mutuality but also delight in the beauty

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37. Kereszty, “‘Bride’ and ‘Mother,’” 96.

38. *Ibid.*, 97.

39. Kereszty, “St. Bernard’s School of Spirituality,” 98.

40. *Ibid.*, 99.

and truth of God. The image of God in the human person glows in the radiance of God's beauty and truth. The way from misery to beauty is also a way for a sinner to become a bride of Christ.

*Magnanimitas* for Bernard is the exact opposite of seeking greatness or offering self-serving displays of one's own kindness; it is, simply put, unconditional trust in God's promises. Moses, David, the apostle Philip, and even the doubting Thomas are examples of the magnanimity that is shared by God with his pupils in the school of Christ. These souls achieve a union of becoming "one Spirit" with God without in any way losing the distinctiveness or integrity of their own human image or human soul.<sup>41</sup>

The goal of this little school is a complete renewal of the human person—genuine freedom in self-possession. Surrendering to God after enrollment in the school is not just about following a self-help guide to overcoming our natural tendency toward a narrow individualism. Its goal can be found within everyday life while also extending beyond the here and now. When Christ returns, both our souls and our bodies will accordingly be returned to us "shining with the splendor of Christ's own glorified body."<sup>42</sup>

"‘BRIDE’ AND ‘MOTHER’ IN THE *SUPER CANTICA*  
OF ST. BERNARD"

Fr. Roch was a master of both theology of the Church and theology of the Eucharist.<sup>43</sup> He also had a passion for defending cogently and creatively the gift of unity found in the ministry and witness of the bishop of Rome.<sup>44</sup> In all these realms he explored urgent issues, opened ecumenical possibilities, and sought to compose a synthesis that could guide Christians (and non-Christians) at many levels of formation. Here we will examine

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41. *Ibid.*, 101.

42. *Ibid.*, 102.

43. See, above all, Roch A. Kereszty, O.Cist., *The Church of God in Jesus Christ: A Catholic Ecclesiology* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009); and *Wedding Feast of the Lamb: Eucharistic Theology from a Historical, Biblical, and Systematic Perspective* (Chicago: Hillebrand Books, 2004).

44. See Kereszty, *The Church of God in Jesus Christ*, 312–40; and William R. Farmer and Roch A. Kereszty, O.Cist., *Peter & Paul in the Church of Rome: The Ecumenical Potential of a Forgotten Perspective* (New York: Paulist Press, 1990).



the chapter in his *The Church of God in Jesus Christ: A Catholic Ecclesiology* dedicated to the nuptial relationship whereby the faithful Christian is wedded as a bride to Christ the bridegroom.<sup>45</sup>

The treatment of Bernard's thought in the historical section of the textbook was written sixteen years after the initial publication of the essay on Bernard's contemporary significance.<sup>46</sup> The juxtaposition of these two treatments reveals different emphases. In the context of medieval ecclesiology, Fr. Roch highlights the social dimension of the nuptial bond and how Bernard the monk leverages this insight to decry the abuse of the Constantinian power that had been accorded to the medieval Church. In the republished essay, however, the focus is almost entirely on the reformation of the soul in its journey through this pilgrim state and beyond to final union. Social issues are barely mentioned in "Bride' and 'Mother,'" and the focus turns to the individual soul's relationship to the Church-bride. In general, and as already indicated in *Jesus Christ*, Fr. Roch strongly favors an eschatological humanism and a eucharistic starting point for the engagement of the laity in the promotion of more just societal structures than any immanentizing proposal for a worldly Church stripped of the nuptial bond between bride and bridegroom.<sup>47</sup>

According to Fr. Roch, the three medieval counterweights to a purely juridical understanding of the Church focused narrowly on the plenitude of power accorded to the pope are St. Bernard, St. Francis, and St. Thomas Aquinas.<sup>48</sup> Bernard's role within that configuration was to lift up the nuptial bond as the new measure for judging the worth of both the state of the Church and that of the individual soul. Their fates are intertwined in God's eyes:

It is the love of Christ that joins the many spouses into the one spouse, into the one church, *carissima illa est una uni* (this dearest one is the one [spouse] for the one [groom]). Yet the soul that is dedicated completely to God alone knows that

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45. Kereszty, *The Church of God in Jesus Christ*, 291–311. It is based on Kereszty, "'Bride' and 'Mother,'" 415–36.

46. Kereszty, *The Church of God in Jesus Christ*, 60–63.

47. *Ibid.*, 154–56, 239.

48. *Ibid.*, 56–66.

God sees her and loves her as if she alone were seen and loved by God. Note that the bridegroom of the church is Christ the Word, not the Son prior to or abstracted from his incarnate state. The bridegroom is the incarnate Word risen and glorified, whose humanity is no longer a screen, but who is completely transparent to the divine glory of the Word.<sup>49</sup>

St. Bernard enjoins every individual soul in the Church to embody in herself the one spouse of Christ. No one is excepted from this standard, including lay people. Moreover, Bernard never applies the spousal relationship to the earthly Jesus.<sup>50</sup> The glory of the Father is radiant in the flesh of the risen Lord whom the bridal soul is called to meet.

This prioritizing of the nuptial does not lead Bernard to ignore other metaphors for the Church. In fact, the Church as the body of Christ is not only employed by Bernard but serves to make the point that this body is dearer to Christ than his “other body,” since the latter was given over to death lest the ecclesial body taste death.<sup>51</sup> This focus also allows Bernard to expound on the sin of persecuting the Church by adding more wounds as well as the corruptness of the current body. In general, Bernard’s ecclesiology includes a prophetic denunciation of any spiritual defilement that has blemished either Christ’s marriage with the Church or the ecclesial body of Christ.

In republishing his earlier reflections on “‘Bride’ and ‘Mother’ in the *Super Cantica* of St. Bernard: An Ecclesiology for our Time?” Fr. Roch highlights three contemporary issues that could be elucidated through a recovery of Bernard’s theology of nuptiality: 1) spirit and institution in the Church; 2) theology of ministry; and 3) the use of both masculine and feminine images of God.<sup>52</sup> In each case, Fr. Roch highlights how Bernard navigates between the Scylla of a reactionary, clerical Church and the Charybdis of an impersonal, nonbridal Church that reduces the preaching of Christ to the social gospel.

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49. Ibid., 61, citing Bernard, *Super cantica* 7.8.

50. Kereszty, *The Church of God in Jesus Christ*, 215n11.

51. Ibid., 61.

52. Ibid., 309–11.

Among many others, St. Bernard had the Latin translations of Origen's commentaries on the Song of Songs at his disposal when he composed his own commentary.<sup>53</sup> Fr. Roch recognizes the distinctive literary genre of Bernard's commentary without engaging the debates about whether Bernard is in full continuity with the allegorical tradition of interpretation that he inherited.<sup>54</sup> It is easy to assume that Bernard is simply extending an allegorical tradition he received from the past. He uses the spiritual senses of Scripture, but he is not confined by their prior uses.

There is still a new "school" of exegesis found in Bernard's reading of the poetry in the biblical text that offers a form of renewal not reducible to the approaches Bernard found in the earlier tradition. Denys Turner sees Bernard as more of a poet imitating the poetry in the Song of Songs itself rather than a mere allegorist, and thereby he speaks of an aesthetic rupture with the older allegorical tradition.<sup>55</sup> The poetic language in Bernard also reworks and intensifies an Augustinian motif of desire.<sup>56</sup> Anne Morris, who finished an MA thesis with Fr. Roch on this topic in 1993, offers this helpful guidance:

This fulfillment or completion of the human person in God does not mean an end to desire. . . . Bernard's poetic language of spiritual desire, then, is not to be misunderstood as sentimentality or romanticism. [Rather,] he uses these images to convey as much as possible the soundless depths of a desire for God which springs from the core of our being and which is itself the gift of God who first desired us.<sup>57</sup>

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53. Ann Matter, *The Voice of My Beloved: The Song of Songs in Western Medieval Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), 39.

54. *Ibid.*, 292–93.

55. Denys Turner, "Metaphor, Poetry, and Allegory: Erotic Love in the Sermons on the Song of Songs of Bernard of Clairvaux," in *Reading Texts, Seeking Wisdom: Scripture and Theology*, ed. David F. Ford and Graham Stanton (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 202–16.

56. Kereszty, "The Relationship between Anthropology and Christology," 472–80.

57. Anne Wallace Morris, "The Theology of the Trinity in Bernard of Clairvaux's *Sermones Super Cantica Canticoorum*" (MA thesis, University of Dallas, 1993), 63.

Fr. Roch highlights the drama of the soul in this never-ending romancing of the soul by God, but he underscores the complexity of the drama. Fr. Roch sees a joining of two stories: the background story line of salvation history and the foregrounded “love story” of the individual soul with Christ. In the first story, one moves from the history of Israel through the Cross and Resurrection to the pouring out of the Spirit in the book of Acts. In the second drama, the story of the individual soul is at the center stage and that of the Church is in the background. But the space and objective structure for the individual soul’s development is provided by the events of salvation history. In fact, both take place at once.

If I may use my own formulation, there is both *diastasis*, or distancing, and the emergence of a strong trinitarian *analogia entis* at the same time.<sup>58</sup>

To return to the three types of contemporaneity, Bernard’s nuptial theology stands opposed to a hijacking of the identity of the Church by both patriarchy and liberalism. In a section entitled “The Bride Found by the Teachers of the Church,” Fr. Roch explains the subtlety of Bernard’s position:

Without the apostles and their successors, the bride could not have found her groom. Yet the hierarchy does not stand between the bride and Christ as a middleman or mailman carrying messages from one to the other. Rather, through her faith, shaped and formed by the hierarchical church, the church-bride transcends any hierarchical mediation and directly touches with the “Finger-of-faith” her groom who has already ascended into heaven.<sup>59</sup>

Based upon Song of Songs 3:3 (“The watchmen found me, those who are guarding the city”), the Church is found, not established, by the apostles and priests. The hierarchical Church likewise is needed to find the brides, but it does not make the ascent

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58. While somewhat speculative, aligning of Fr. Roch’s theology with a trinitarian approach to the *analogia entis* allows one to consider its proximity to the position adopted by Fr. David Bálas in *Metousia Theou*. As John Betz notes, analogy within Bernard’s *Supra cantica* is not just anagogy but also katology. See John R. Betz, *Christ, the Logos of Creation: An Essay in Analogical Metaphysics* (Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Academic, 2023), 454–55.

59. Kereszty, *The Church of God in Jesus Christ*, 296–98.

to the risen groom a reality. Some brides make the mistake of ignoring the need to recognize the fallen nature of their own flesh with the aid of the Lord's mercy ("know nothing but Christ crucified," 1 Cor 2:2), and others continue to seek Jesus in the flesh and ignore the travail of being led by grace to the ascent to the Risen Lord. Either way, the visible, hierarchical Church is needed to point the way. Trouble ensues when "apostles and their successors" begin to think of themselves not as guides to or facilitators of an encounter, but as the way itself.

The value of male priests as agents of ministry (principally, for Bernard, as preachers) is likewise held in a delicate balance by Bernard.<sup>60</sup> To those who would push for *sacerdos* as *alter Christus* in an authoritarian manner, Bernard issues a stern warning that the priest must first "become bride, be introduced into the bridal chamber of contemplative love, and become a mother anxious to feed her little ones with milk, who cannot yet endure the solid food of contemplation" before authentic leadership can be exercised.<sup>61</sup> To those who would eliminate this role altogether, Bernard stresses solidarity with the poor but equally so the ordained minister's proper function in conveying contemplative truths so that others may be brought to the bridal chamber to meet Christ. The priest does not act as Christ in the bridal chamber; the priest leads the faithful to the place of union.

Regarding the theology of gender, Bernard applies masculine and feminine images to both the Father and the Son, thereby enhancing our sense of God's transcendence.<sup>62</sup> While the feminine vocabulary strikes many of our contemporaries as novel and out of place in the theology of a medieval male monk, the strategy of distinguishing between a mode of being beyond names and gendered identities and a mode of signification whereby male and female traits can be ascribed to the divinity is not out of place at all. Fr. Roch makes two further points about the uniqueness of Bernard's position. The first concerns the tendency of the sinful bride to seek union with the human flesh of Christ before the Resurrection and Ascension. Bernard is

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60. Ibid., 309–11.

61. Ibid., 310.

62. Ibid., 305–09.

not dismissing *imitatio Christi*, but his use of the nuptial language in relationship to the humanity of Christ is reserved for the glorified humanity of the Lord. This point is a polemical one for Fr. Roch because it reveals the spiritual dimensions of Bernard's theology of romance. According to Fr. Roch, Bernard heightens the eroticism of the relationship precisely in order to show the radical intimacy that can be shared between "Word-Spirit and the human soul. In comparison, everything else fades."<sup>63</sup> Fr. Roch is acutely aware of not only feminist critiques but also the worry about sublimated sexuality. None of these criticisms hits its mark if one can grasp the radicality of Bernard's proposal regarding the attractiveness of the glorified humanity of Christ. Toning down the erotic language has the opposite effect of making these criticisms more palatable. The bride and bridegroom share a real incarnate union, but on a spiritual plane.<sup>64</sup>

The second point has to do with Mary and the Church. This theme was taken up by the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council and resulted in the inclusion of a chapter on Mary as the conclusion to *Lumen gentium*, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church.<sup>65</sup> This theme is addressed throughout *The Church of God in Jesus Christ*.<sup>66</sup> Fr. Roch suggests that a further study of Bernard's relationship to the Fathers on Mary as the type for understanding the motherhood of the Church would yield much fruit.<sup>67</sup> It is clear how the new relationships of fecundity that Bernard associates with the spiritual generativity of the maternal Church upends the medieval notion of the male as having an exclusive dominion over freedom and autonomy. Where does Bernard's Mariology stand in relation to a contemporary theology of gender? On this point Fr. Roch offers a tantalizing suggestion: "The exaltation of the woman reveals something unfathomable

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63. *Ibid.*, 305.

64. See also Janet Martin Soskice, *The Kindness of God: Metaphor, Gender, and Religious Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

65. See Brian E. Daley, SJ, "Sign and Source: Mary in the *Ressourcement* and at Vatican II," in *Mary on the Eve of the Second Vatican Council*, ed. John C. Cavadini and Danielle M. Peters (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017), 31–54.

66. See, for example, Kereszty, *The Church of God in Jesus Christ*, 215–18.

67. *Ibid.*, 311n70.

in God himself, his divine humility, which raises the creation, that which is different from God, symbolized through what is most frail in human eyes, to a relationship of mutuality with God.”<sup>68</sup> The Marian profile, to borrow a term from Hans Urs von Balthasar, opens our eyes to the not otherness of all that God has bestowed on the order of creatures. Through the perfection of creation in the Blessed Virgin Mary, we come to know in a sublime manner God’s self-established and perfect mutuality with what is not God. Here is where what has been called the trinitarian *analogia entis* receives new life and could be extended beyond Bernard’s defense of Mary as both bride and model of spiritual motherhood.<sup>69</sup>

ST. BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX  
AND RESSOURCEMENT TODAY

What is meant by a “Cistercian path to *ressourcement*”? In plain language, it signifies a return to the sources of Christian thought that is guided by the model of St. Bernard. The Hungarians in Dallas were hardly alone in pursuing this goal. The great Jean LeClercq, OSB, offered a first step on the monastic integration of diverse disciplines present in the medieval monastery in his magisterial *L’Amour des lettres et le désir de Dieu: Initiation aux auteurs monastiques du moyen âge*, a book published in Paris just one year after the Hungarian Cistercians fled to Rome.<sup>70</sup> LeClercq rightly cautions against worrying too much about the scientific character of medieval monastic theology, since that standard for judging theology and its fruits was developed only in the thirteenth century just as monastic theology began to be replaced by scholastic

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68. *Ibid.*, 311.

69. There are many dangers here of elevating Mary beyond her creatureliness, but some ecumenical starting points for this line of reflection can be found in Chiara Lubich, *Mary: Her Identity, Our Identity* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2018); Piero Coda, *From the Trinity: The Coming of God in Revelation and Theology* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2020), 274–75; and Sergius Bulgakov, *The Burning Bush: On the Orthodox Veneration of the Mother of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009).

70. Jean LeClercq, OSB, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982).

models.<sup>71</sup> The retrieval of monastic theology cannot be limited to finding an antidote to what emerged as a polarity in tension with the scholasticism of the thirteenth century, especially given all of the convulsions that the discipline of theology had undergone in subsequent centuries. LeClercq gave a precise, historical view of how the monks read classical texts and the Bible within their life of prayer so that others, including the young Cistercian Fr. Roch, could dwell on how this model of integration could be applied to contemporary theological debates.

Fr. Roch himself illustrated a boldly new Cistercian path to *ressourcement*. Other such ways had been pursued by philosophers and theologians in the twentieth century and not without profit. Kereszty himself admits he was guided by Étienne Gilson's groundbreaking study *The Mystical Theology of St. Bernard* as well as the acts of a 1953 conference in Dijon that commemorated the 800th anniversary of the death of St. Bernard.<sup>72</sup> His vision of spiritual power in the Church according to St. Bernard, whereby all ministers, including abbots and popes, have the spiritual *potestas* to facilitate the encounter of bride and bridegroom but not *dominium* over the bride, depends upon a key essay by Yves Congar from that colloquium on the ecclesiology of St. Bernard.<sup>73</sup>

These ample resources were his starting points, but Fr. Roch never attempted to become a full-fledged scholar of St. Bernard's theology. Instead, he deployed the scholarship of the European and Anglo-American masters like Congar and Gilson to rethink systematic theology for today. Fr. Roch expounded Cistercian theology within the matrix of modern Catholic systematic thought with an ecumenical audience in view. At the same time, Bernard had taught him that the love of God is an absolute reality that undergirds and is presupposed by all teachings. Both nonbelieving seekers and overly zealous adherents to a

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71. *Ibid.*, 192.

72. Kereszty, "St. Bernard's School of Spirituality," 103n1. Fr. Roch also points to Denis Farkasfalvy, O.Cist., "St. Bernard the Theologian: Forty Years of Research," *Communio: International Catholic Review* 17, no. 4 (Winter 1990): 580–94.

73. Yves Congar, "L'ecclésiologie de Saint Bernard," in *Saint Bernard théologien: actes du Congrès de Dijon, 15–19 septembre, 1953*, *Analecta sacri ordinis Cisterciensis* 9 (Rome: Editiones Cistercienses, 1953): 136–90. Cf. Kereszty, *The Church of God in Jesus Christ*, 62n20.



reactionary traditionalist paradigm of faith need to be reminded of this incarnate truth. In Fr. Roch's own words,

Beyond the Christian public, I hope to reach a general audience. All those who have at least a vague intuition of, or just a sincere desire for, an Absolute that is pure love may discover the historic climax of the manifestation of Absolute Love in the mystery of Christ. Conversely, without an existential openness to the Revelation of Divine Love even a massive convergence of historical evidence can easily be ignored and the most coherent systematic reflection jettisoned as futile speculation.<sup>74</sup>

The dual and simultaneous attention to the nonbelieving seeker and the believer with no inward attraction to the felt experience of divine love characterizes the whole of Fr. Roch's theological engagement. His theology was always a mix of Cistercian wisdom rooted in the prayer of the Church and Buberian openness to God's unexpected intrusion into the everydayness of life.

Fr. Roch died peacefully at Our Lady of Dallas Cistercian Abbey on December 14, 2022, two months shy of turning ninety and on the feast day of Blessed Janos Brenner, a Hungarian Cistercian martyred in 1957 to whom he was especially devoted. With that coincidence, the circle of his earthly life from Budapest to Dallas was closed, and the joyful union with his teacher Bernard in heaven began anew. Sixty-five years separates Fr. Roch's death from the martyrdom of Blessed Janos, but the kinship of spiritual purpose with the Hungarian saints and martyrs is equally evident. Abbot Wendelin of Zirc had written at that time to his fellow monks, while having been released from prison and living under house arrest since 1957, that they must never forget what St. Bernard had taught them about *scientia cum pietate*.<sup>75</sup> Like Isaac of Stella's description of the master of all Cistercians, Fr. Roch also emanated a joy-filled *iucunditas* that was "terrifying" in its love and "love-inspiring" in its terror.<sup>76</sup> Fr. Roch's gentle manner was a living witness to Bernard's distinctively Cistercian model of unifying the intellective and

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74. Kereszty, *Jesus Christ: Fundamentals of Christology*, xxviii.

75. Farkasfalvy, "The Cistercians in Texas," 19–20.

76. Kereszty, "St. Bernard's School of Spirituality," 96.

affective paths to knowing Christ and serving his Church. That trademark smile and the wisdom of Christ it communicated will be sorely missed. □

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