



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Lauren Dugger, [ldugger@sunwestpr.com](mailto:ldugger@sunwestpr.com), 214/373-1601

## **CISTERCIAN'S FATHER DENIS FARKASFALVY TO RECEIVE 2016 CATHOLIC FOUNDATION AWARD**

*Former Cistercian Abbot and headmaster to be recognized at the Foundation's annual award dinner on Feb. 19, 2016 for his incredible impact on Catholic education*

DALLAS – Abbot Denis Miklós Farkasfalvy, O. Cist., has been selected as the 34<sup>th</sup> Catholic Foundation Award honoree in recognition of his impact on the Cistercian Abbey and School in Dallas and the Cistercian Order internationally. Fr. Denis will be honored during The Catholic Foundation Award Dinner on Friday, Feb. 19, 2016 at the Hilton Anatole.

“Fr. Denis’ impact on Cistercian Preparatory School and our Dallas Catholic community is one of perseverance, faith and educational excellence,” said Matt Kramer, president and CEO of The Catholic Foundation. “His remarkable success in the name of his faith and the countless lives he has positively changed makes it clear why he is being honored with the 34<sup>th</sup> Catholic Foundation Award.”

Born in Székesfehérvár, Hungary in 1936, Fr. Denis was the fourth and youngest child of a middle-class family who became refugees at the end of World War II. Despite Soviet occupation, he continued his Catholic education and eventually joined the Cistercian novitiate, which was illegal under Soviet rule.

After making his religious vows in 1956, The Hungarian Revolution broke out unexpectedly. Fr. Denis managed to escape to Austria, but he was not able to return to Hungary for 15 years. He then began theological studies in Rome and was ordained a priest, obtained a doctorate in theology, and was directed to move to the United States.

After he arrived in Irving, Texas, Fr. Denis learned some rudimentary English and earned his master’s in mathematics from Texas Christian University. In 1965, he became a math and theology teacher, a part-time theology professor at the University of Dallas, and was appointed Cistercian’s second headmaster at the age of 32. As headmaster, Fr. Denis oversaw the building of the first gymnasium and sports facilities, designed curriculum, and served as Form Master for the Class of 1974, 1981 and 1982.

In 1988, he was elected the second Abbot of the Cistercian monastery in Irving. For the next 24 years he continued teaching in the prep school, and with the support of Cistercian alumni led by the Class 1974, built the Abbey Church and doubled its land holdings, built the school library, expanded the sports facilities, remodeled the monastery, and oversaw the renovation of the entire middle and upper schools.

More importantly to Fr. Denis, between 2003 and 2011, 16 young men came to the Abbey, of whom 11 persevered until final vows and ordination. Of the 18 Cistercians now teaching at the prep school, 13 took vows during his years as Abbot.

Through his activities as a theologian, Fr. Denis helped establish the Second Century Seminar in 1965, which pulled Protestant and Catholic theologians from several Texas universities and seminaries to study the foundational period in Church History that links the New Testament with the era of the Church Fathers.

In 2003, Pope John Paul II appointed him to the Pontifical Biblical Commission, an international group of 20 biblical scholars that advise the Pope on biblical matters. He served on the Commission until 2013. In 2004, the University of Dallas granted him an honorary doctorate and appointed him as an adjunct professor of theology. Fr. Denis has published scholarly essays, books and commentaries on biblical matters and Cistercian history in English, Hungarian, French and Italian.

The Catholic Foundation has granted Cistercian Preparatory School \$220,000, as well as \$70,000 to the Cistercian Abbey for renovations. Fr. Denis says the Foundation's support means the effective presence of care, solidarity, and understanding of the importance of Catholic education.

In 2012, Fr. Denis submitted his resignation as Abbot as required by canon law. He continues to teach theology at the University of Dallas and publish. At the age of 79, his life and calling have been an unfolding story designed and carried out by God's unfathomable inspiration and mysterious presence, providing direction and grace, but never revealing the whole plan until it reaches the divinely established purpose.

"I made a decision to stay faithful to God and my vow, and that allowed me to trust in God for each step I have taken," said Fr. Denis. "My path has been paved by God's providential hand, not by my own plans."

Table and individual reservations for the 2016 Catholic Foundation Award Dinner can be made at The Catholic Foundation. Visit [www.catholicfoundation.com](http://www.catholicfoundation.com), call 972.661.9792 or email [lscheets@catholicfoundation.com](mailto:lscheets@catholicfoundation.com) for more information.

The Catholic Foundation is a trusted giving vehicle for the Catholic community. Chartered in 1955, the Foundation was founded by a group of dedicated Catholic laymen with a vision that extended far beyond the charitable needs of the moment. The Foundation has spent decades building a strong community, helping donors fulfill their charitable goals, and preserving the founders' vision and philanthropic legacy. Over the past 30 years, the Foundation has provided more than \$100 million in grants to religious, charitable and educational organizations. Today, it manages more than \$200 million in assets and houses more than 370 charitable funds and trusts.

###