



Norbertine Community News

NORBERTINE COMMUNITY OF NEW MEXICO

From the Prior's Desk Reflections on a Summer Sabbatical



I recently returned from a three month summer sabbatical. "Sabbatical" derives from the word "Sabbath" – the day of rest in the Jewish tradition. My summer was a gift of rest.

I must admit that when I left in late May, I was quite tired. The tiredness resulted partly from being busy putting things in place before I left, but also, and primarily, from the lack of balance in my life as I had attempted to meet my responsibilities as pastor of a lively, three thousand family parish, and as the leader of the Norbertine Community in New Mexico.

By "lack of balance," I mean there were lots of things to do and not enough time to do them. But life is not just good ministry or good work. I had long embraced the notion that spirituality is holistic, embracing the whole person. The oft quoted line from Irenaeus, an early father of the Church, "the glory of God is the human person fully alive," captures that notion. But it is, as we know, often much more easy to embrace something conceptually than to implement it practically.

If God's glory is related to our aliveness, then we must address whatever imbalance we find in our lives. A healthy spirituality is certainly related to a good prayer life and a sense of service, but it is equally, and just as importantly, related to what and how we eat, to when and how we exercise (physical health), to if and what we read (intellectual health), and to the nurturance and development of relationships (emotional health).

I began the summer with an eight day, directed retreat at Sacred Heart Jesuit Retreat House in

the foothills of the Rockies outside of Denver, Colorado. It was a very positive and powerful experience, and it set the tone for the rest of the summer. Ironically, my Jesuit retreat director had been a camper, and later a counselor, at a boy's camp which the Norbertines had run in Wisconsin for many years. He knew many of the seasoned Norbertines with whom I have lived. That provided an immediate connection with him.

From Colorado, I went to the Norbertine House of Studies in Chicago for a course at Catholic Theological Union, to St. Norbert Abbey in Wisconsin to spend some time with my Norbertine brothers, to some good quality visits with my sisters, and to some extended time at the home of some good friends in Door County on the shores of Green Bay. The setting, the weather, the hospitality, and the friendship of that stay were extraordinary gifts of the summer.

As you might imagine, I rested, and a whole collage of experiences contributed to that rest. I had ample time to read, to bike, to converse with family and friends, to pray, to hike, to experience solitude and silence, and to be more careful about what and how much I ate. I even kept in touch with ministry by assisting my Norbertine brother, Fr. Ken DeGroot, by presiding at Sunday Masses over four weekends at his downtown Green Bay Parish where four of his eight masses are in Spanish in service of his outreach to immigrants.

After three days of hiking in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado, I returned to New Mexico at the end of August, revitalized, rested, renewed, and healthier. Now the challenge remains to change some patterns and institute some new ones so that a holistic spirituality may assist in reinvigorating the ministries I love as pastor and prior. That will mean, in part, regularly building some holistic "Sabbath time" into my schedule. I hope you too might recognize the importance of building some "Sabbath time" into your lives.

Fr. Joel Garner, O.Praem

Norbertine Associates of Santa Maria de la Vid



In the summer of 2001 Fr. Joel Garner and the Norbertine Community responded positively to my written request for dialogue regarding

establishment of a process by which a small group of six men and women could more formally embrace Norbertine spirituality. Our group initially envisioned that we could support the community through friendship, ministry, and service. We deeply hoped that the community would support us also by providing opportunities for spiritual growth, theological enrichment, and a supportive structure for our intentional community. Brother Dennis Butler soon agreed to be the liaison, and we began defining our Christian discipleship in the context of Norbertine charisms and the spirit of Vatican II.

Over the next several months we

drafted our mission statement and defined a spiritual formation process for ourselves. We were graciously mentored by Tom and Luci Phelan, longtime associates of St. Norbert Abbey, as we learned about St. Norbert and the history of the Order of Premontre. Finally, on November 13, 2002, we were formally initiated as the Norbertine Associates of Santa Maria de la Vid Priory, committing ourselves to the special spiritual path reflected in the vision and goals of the Norbertine Associates Mission Statement.

The Norbertine Associates Mission Statement

Responding to God's Spirit, we are the Norbertine Associates of Santa Maria de la Vid Priory. Within the context of Norbertine spirituality we commit ourselves to lives of prayer and contemplation, to honoring the uniqueness of each person's journey, to seeking to live radical discipleship, ongoing conversion, and compassionate service, and to engaging in mutual friendship and support of our Norbertine brothers and sisters.

During these past two years the Norbertine Associates have strived to maintain this new relationship with the community and with each other through intentional gathering and conversation, common prayer, theological discussion, service projects, and support in ministry. Each of us is expected to embrace uniquely a disciplined lifestyle that is self-directed towards personal growth in holiness and focused on the building up the Church. It is our intent that making this personal and rigorous commitment will be both a life-changing experience and a life-sustaining religious practice.

As we Norbertine Associates begin our third year together, we continue to discern our commitment, our goals, and our group dynamics. We are welcoming three new members, and we are open to the Spirit and new possibilities. We offer steadfast support to the Norbertine Community and to each other, and we are committed to be bearers of hope and the vision of Vatican II in the Church and in the world.



Simple Vows

Jaime Bernardo Avila - Borunda, O.Praem and Robert E. Campbell, O.Praem professed simple vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience at St. Norbert Abbey in De Pere, Wisconsin on the Feast of St. Augustine, August 28, 2004. Both men are members of Santa Maria de la Vid Priory in Albuquerque. The priory is a daughter house of the Wisconsin Abbey - an order of canons regular following the rule of St. Augustine.

Born in Chihuahua, Mexico, Jaime holds a B.A. in Psychology and Spanish from the University of New Mexico. Last year and again this year, he is gaining apostolic experience as a member of the Pastoral Team at Our Lady of



the Most Holy Rosary Parish in Albuquerque while taking philosophy and theology courses in preparation for his Minis-

terial Studies at Catholic Theologic Union in Chicago. He is the son of Jaime and Laura Avila of Albuquerque.

Born in Massachusetts, Robert holds a B.A. in Philosophy from Stonehill College, and M.A. in Education from Columbia University in New York,



and a graduate certificate in Spiritual Direction from St. Thomas University in Miami, Florida. In June, 2004, he graduated from Catholic Theo-

logical Union in Chicago with a Master of Divinity degree and a Certificate of Biblical Spirituality. He is the son of John and Janet Campbell of Naples, Florida. Brother Robert has begun teaching theology at St. Pius X High School in Albuquerque where he chairs the Theology Department.



St. Norbert College in New



tion for New Mexicans engaged in ministry in their parishes and congregations.

In 1996, they established a formal relationship with St. Norbert College in DePere, Wisconsin, in order to provide a campus in New Mexico for its Masters of Theological Studies

Program.

The program is intentionally ecumenical, and courses are taught by a stellar group of local faculty as well as by regular members of the St. Norbert College faculty. The M.T.S. Degree program focuses on pastoral theology and allows specialization in several different areas of ministry.

The M.T.S. core courses were offered, one each fall and spring semester, from 1996 to the present. Courses in specialization are offered in the summers.

This Masters program is the only graduate degree program in theology within a 500 mile radius of Albuquerque. The Norbertine Community's long standing commitment to theological education and religious formation now continues in a unique way in New Mexico. Courses are generally taught at the Catholic Center of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe.

The graduates this summer included two Catholic high school teachers, a grade school teacher, a pastoral care minister, a deacon involved in prison ministry, a dentist who volunteers in the missions, and a parish RCIA director.

The Academic Dean of St. Norbert College, Michael Marsdon, delivered the graduation address. Louise Nielsen, a Norbertine lay associate, spoke on behalf of the students, and Dr. Howard Ebert, the director of the M.T.S. program, called the candidates to receive their diplomas. Fr. Joel Garner, prior of the local Norbertine Community, chairs the local Graduate Committee. Information about the program can be obtained by calling Rita Lucero at 505-831-8100.

St. Norbert College in New Mexico? How? When? Where?

On a Sunday afternoon at the end of June, seven New Mexican men and women received a Masters of Theological Studies Degree from St. Norbert College at graduation ceremonies at the church of Santa Maria de la Vid Priory of the Norbertine Community.

In 1995, the Ecumenical Institute for Ministry was founded by a group of church ministers and Christian educators, including Fr. Joel Garner, O.Praem. They were motivated by the need for systematic, theological educa-

Icons: Art, Contemplation and Life by Jaime Avila



Icon by Jaime Avila

For many, icons are simply a religious image; for some, icons are an artistic expression; others may see icons as a tool of prayer, meditation and contemplation.

However, many

people are not aware of the spiritual richness that the icon brings to the iconographer. For a person who has been writing icons (*writing is the term used to describe the process of making an icon*) as a spiritual practice, an icon more than an image or a piece of art, or a contemplative practice becomes a way of life.

As my life progresses, I have been able to experience my spiritual journey enriched not only by the use of icons, but also by writing them. As much as an icon may look like a piece of art, the writing of an icon is primarily a way of contemplative prayer. The writing of an icon is a dialogue with the Divine Mystery (God) on a very intimate level, in which the iconographer lets the Divine Mystery become both the writer and the content of the icon, while the iconographer becomes a tool of writing.

Many people describe icons as windows into heaven, since icons connect the physical and the spiritual. The iconographer in the process of writing an icon is looking and reaching to the spiritual dimension that exists on the

other side of the window. As the iconographer Robert Lentz points out, one spends so much time on the other side of the window, and one gets so used to the spiritual world that the physical begins to look unreal. This happens because, through contemplation, we realize that we fix our gaze on things that are not spiritually satisfying. We also become conscious that our experience of the world is incomplete if we are not aware of the deeper spiritual dimension of our lives. At that point, we also realize that the only things that really matter are those which have their existence centered in God.

As a Norbertine, I have been doing different kinds of ministry, mainly with the

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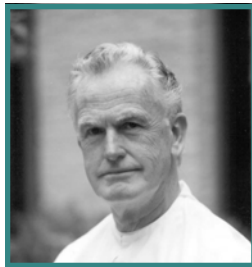
Icons (continued)

faith community of Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Parish. As I meditate upon my ministry, I realize the great impact that the practice of iconography has had on my ministerial work. Through iconography, I have learned that I can be a good minister only when I let the Divine Mystery work through me. When I write an icon, the Mystery makes use of me as a tool to talk to the people, minister to them, and help them. In this way, ministry becomes a spiritual experience, both for me and for the people to whom I minister.

Through iconography, becoming a channel of the Mystery has become the focus of my life and ministry. This focus has taken many different forms: ministering in a parish, volunteering at community centers, praying for others, or simply sharing God's love in my interaction with the people around me. Allowing the Mystery to work through me is a source of great joy and satisfaction.



Meditative Retreats by



This Fall Fr. Fran Dorff will conduct a series of five offerings at the Hermitage Retreat.

Sept. 18—*The Soul's Journey: An Intro-*

duction to Meditative Writing

Oct. 9 — *Relating Heart to Heart: Meditative Writing for Married Couples*

Oct. 15-17—*Exploring your Soul's Dwelling Place*

Nov. 13— *Making the 11th Step*

Dec 4 — *Living Creatively in a Broken World: The Journey from Suffering to Service*

Fr. Fran holds a doctorate from *Institut Catholique* in Paris, and is a practitioner of Process Spirituality. For more information call (505) 873-4399, ext. 224.



Comings and

Our brother Fr. Christian O'Brien retired to St. Norbert Abbey due to illness. Fr. Chris had been a superb minister to the sick and dying in hospitals in Albuquerque for over 15 years. We miss him... Fr. Xavier Colavechio, Abbot E. Tom DeWane, and Fr. Pete Renard spent parts of their summer supporting us in our ministries to the people of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe... Brother Dennis Butler monitored the renovation of our 50 year old kitchen in Augustine Commons... Fr. Nick Nirschl and Fr. Gene Gries oversaw the change from swamp coolers and hot water heat to refrigerated air and forced air heat in St. Norbert Cloister. We did not think the boiler would last another winter.. Fr. Roberto Fenzl spent six weeks preaching on behalf of Peru's Norbertine mission in California this summer before returning to his ministry to prisoners and to immigrants... Fr. Larry Mayer came to our community in early September after a three year assignment at Holy Spirit House of Studies in Chicago.

