



Norbertine Community News

From the Prior's Desk...Memories



Memory is a precious gift. It is capable of bringing to the mind's eye events and relationships that span the decades. There are occasions that evoke a

flood of memories. I count class reunions among them.

This summer three New Mexican Norbertines returned to Wisconsin to celebrate class reunions. Fr. Gene Gries returned to Neenah for his forty-fifth high school reunion. Fr. Christian O'Brien celebrated his fiftieth high school reunion with fellow classmates from Central Catholic, a former Norbertine high school, in Green Bay. I, myself, spent a delightful evening with my former eighth grade classmates. We graduated from St. Joseph Grade School in Green Bay in 1953—fifty years ago.

Many of us had to reintroduce ourselves to one another since our sizes and shapes, our hair styles, or lack thereof, could in many instances only produce wild guesses. But once we did a flood of memories came—at least for me.

It is certainly true that our memories are strongest with our closest friends, but I was surprised that a whole host of memories were elicited by other classmates most of whom I had not seen in decades, and some not since eighth grade. Visiting the old neighborhood where I grew up, spending my eighth grade year living immediately across from the church and school, intensified those memories.

We were all raised in a different Catholic culture in the 1950's, one that was much more black and white and much like our pastor Fr. Diny—stern and dogmatic. We learned from the two Franciscan sisters in our class who attended the reunion that Sr. Mary Jane, our principal, was still alive, feisty as ever, living at the motherhouse, now in her nineties. Had we known that, she would have gotten an invitation so that we could hear her vigorously clap her hands and set us straight one more time.

The reunion organizers arranged with the cur-

rent pastor of St. Joseph that I offer the Saturday evening mass to which my classmates were invited. The mass was really a parish family affair with the attendance of not only some of my classmates but also the participation of a couple celebrating their fiftieth wedding anniversary with their family and friends, and the participation of two young couples baptizing their children as well as the regular Saturday afternoon parishioners. The church was full.

I was particularly pleased to preside at the Eucharist in the parish of my youth. My faith had been nurtured there. I discerned my vocation there. I celebrated my first mass there. I brought a special awareness to my proclamation of Jesus' words "Do this in memory of me" at the mass. After all, we were all there because of our faith in him.

This Parish of St. Joseph, that had two full-time assistants in addition to the pastor in the 1950's, now had one priest who was also pastor of two other parishes on Green Bay's west side. The current pastor was very gracious in welcoming me.

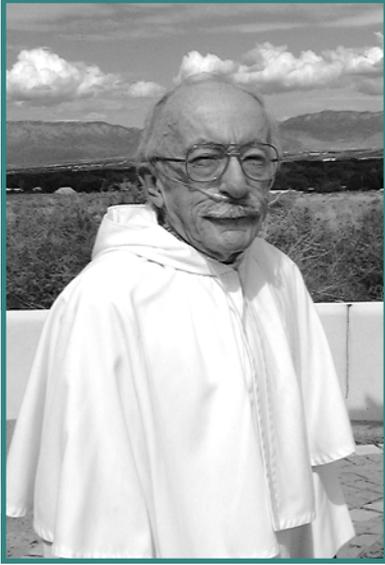
Since my mother and stepfather had moved from the parish shortly after my ordination, I realized while I was vesting that this was the first mass I had offered in the parish since my very first mass there in 1965—the year the Second Vatican Council ended.

One aspect of that great day in my life reflected the difficult initial struggles many had with change. Despite the encouragement of the church, my pastor had resisted turning the altar toward the people. He was the last hold-out in the city. I went to see him and indicated that I really wanted to celebrate my first mass in my home parish facing the people. I told him that I could bring a temporary altar in from a Norbertine parish, and then it would be removed right after the celebration.

He said that I could do that, but, if I did, he would not participate in my first mass as pastor. I did and he didn't. That memory has long been symbolic for me of how difficult the changes in the church were for some and that we Catholic Christians were on the onset of a whole new era the full implications of which we have yet to appreciate.

Fr. Joel

John H. Edwards, O.Praem.



John H. Edwards, age 64, an Oblate member of the Norbertine Community of Santa Maria de la Vid, entered into the eternal kingdom of God on March 17, 2003.

John had a unique human and spiritual journey. He was born on June 15, 1938, in England. As a young adult John studied nursing in England and received his R.N. there. Just before coming to the United States in late 1965, he joined the Catholic Church.

While working as a nurse in Chicago, he came into contact with the Norbertine Community. For a three-year period bridging the late 60's and early 70's John explored with the Norbertines a possible vocation to religious priesthood, but decided that God was not calling him in that direction. He continued his nursing career in Chicago until health problems brought him to New Mexico in the summer of 1986.

Ironically, a few months after his arrival, he noticed in an Albuquerque newspaper the name of Fr. Robert Brooks, one of the founding fathers of the priory. Fr. Brooks had been his mentor while John was in the seminary.

Not realizing that the Norbertines had come to New Mexico, this discovery in

the mid-80's led to John's reconnecting with the Norbertines and their ministry at Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Catholic Community in Albuquerque. This led subsequently to his active participation in parish ministry, including participation on the RCIA team, teaching in religious education, participating in the Small Christian Community Movement, and playing the organ for church liturgies.

When his health conditions led to his retirement as a nurse-supervisor at UNM hospital, he was invited to engage in a new ministry with the Norbertine Community in November of 1995. His new ministry as a receptionist and executive assistant to the prior not only brought new meaning to his life, but allowed him to make a significant con-

tribution to the goal of establishing a Norbertine abbey in New Mexico.

Living with the Norbertine Community, John became a lay associate and subsequently the first American Norbertine Oblate, by professing his commitment on August 14, 1998.

John had a wide variety of interests including photography, acrylic painting, aviation, writing, computer graphics, and gardening (when able). He appreciated a wide variety of music. He played the organ, synthesizer and piano. John is survived by the members of his Norbertine Community as well as one sister, Jill Bassett and her husband Jim, of Plymouth, England, as well as a nephew Duncan and niece Mary. John is missed by his Norbertine brothers.



Blessing of a New Abbot



Abbot Gary J. Neville, O.Praem., was blessed abbot of St. Norbert Abbey by Bishop Robert Banks of Green Bay on June 6, 2003, the Feast of St. Norbert. Abbot Gary is the sixth abbot in the one hundred ten year history of St. Norbert Abbey. His term is for nine years and he is

the leader of eighty-five Norbertine priests and brothers. The service of the community extends from De Pere, Wisconsin, to Chicago, Illinois, to Jackson, Mississippi, to Albuquerque, New Mexico, and to the jungles of Northern Peru.

The abbot is a graduate of Norbertine schools and did his theological training at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago where he was later an assistant professor of Canon Law and registrar. His primary ministries at the time of his election were as Secretary-Treasurer of the Norbertine Fathers and Assistant Formation Director. Fr. Joel Garner, Prior, and Fr. Gene Gries, Sub-Prior, of Santa Maria de la Vid Priory represented the community at the Eucharist and blessing.



Seminarians...



Robert Campbell, a third-year student at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, participated in a Clinical Pastoral Education Program at Presbyterian Hospital in

Albuquerque for ten weeks this past summer. Robert took this unit of CPE because it is a requirement of the seminary, but also because he has a serious interest in hospital chaplaincy. Each week six seminarian participants (three Roman Catholics, two Episcopalians, and one Lutheran) participated in two verbatim seminars, an interpersonal relation seminar, a teaching seminar, and a pastoral communications lab. Individual supervision hours were also provided. Each student had clinical responsibility for an area of the hospital and responsibility for being in on-call rotation at Presbyterian, including both overnight on-calls and day

on-calls. Robert was assigned pastoral care of the hospital's oncology unit. He found the summer program deeply satisfying but also strenuous.

After completing his CPE Robert visited with his family in South Florida. He also represented the community at the solemn profession of Onwu Akpa, O. Praem, at the Norbertine Priory of St. Moses the Black in Jackson, Mississippi on the Feast of St. Augustine on August 28th.

Robert is a graduate of Stonehill College, and earned a Masters from Columbia University in New York City.



Jaime Avila, our first-year novice, returned

to New Mexico from the novitiate at St. Norbert Abbey at the end of August. He had spent one year at the abbey in a fundamental orientation program to religious life and the Norbertine community. He also gained ministerial experience, particularly in prison ministry.

Jaime also had an opportunity to work on his artistic skills in music and iconography. His second-year novitiate will be his apostolic year, during which he will serve as an intern on the pastoral team at Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Parish. Jaime, a native of Mexico, graduated from the University of New Mexico with a degree in Spanish and Psychology.



Meditative Retreats by

This Fall Fr. Fran Dorff will conduct a series of seven offerings at the Hermitage Retreat. Among the themes that will be addressed are *Seeds for Living Soulfully: A Meditative Approach to the Psalms* (Sept. 20), *The Soul's Dwelling: a Retreat in Meditative Writing* (Oct. 10-12), *The Strange Affair: On Falling in Love with God* (Oct. 25), *Spiritual Pilgrims: A Retreat in Meditative Writing* (Nov. 7-9), *R.S.V.P.: the Soul's invitations* (Dec. 6).

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.

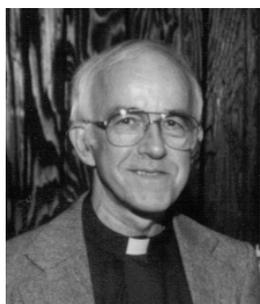


Much of his adult life. He was a kind and hospitable man, and everyone who came to our Center experienced his gentleness and sense of welcome. We have lost not only a talented colleague in ministry but also a good friend.

Clyde was buried in his home town of Baton Rouge, Mississippi. A memorial prayer service was celebrated in memory of Clyde on September 4th at the Church of Santa Maria de la Vid. He is survived by his mother Corinne of Baton Rouge and his sister Anna Marie Nichols and her husband Nick of Meridian, Mississippi.



Fr. Richard Ver Bust—RIP



Fr. Richard Ver Bust, a priest of the Green Bay Diocese and a long-standing friend of the Norbertine Community of New Mexico died on July 11, 2003 at the age of 71. St. Norbert College in Wisconsin has a New Mexico campus for its Masters of Theological Studies Program. Fr. Richard was the founding director of that program and since his retirement served as a teacher for the Spring course in New Mexico for the last half-dozen years. He had a relationship with St. Norbert College for over 43 years. He was a student of life, and he never stopped learning. It was that quality that made him a wonderful teacher.

He was appreciative of the unique culture of New Mexico and was a collector of Native American pottery made by the potters in various pueblos. He left his pottery collection to the Norbertines of New Mexico to be sold to endow and foster a program of spirituality based upon Native American, Hispanic and Anglo spirituality. Fr. Joel Garner, prior, went to Green Bay to represent the Norbertines, his graduate students, and his friends in New Mexico at Fr. Richard's funeral liturgy.

Clyde Landry—



Clyde Landry was the editor of *Norbertine Community News*. He completed three quarters of this issue before dying suddenly of a heart attack at his home on August 18, 2003. Clyde was our talented Jack-of-all trades who replaced John Edwards 18 months ago as the director of our Hermitage Retreat at our Center for Spiritual Life. He was the executive assistant to the prior, the key man in our development program, and a computer whiz. There was little Clyde could not do on the computer. He developed our web site and did desktop publishing of brochures and mailings. Clyde came to join our staff from another retreat center and was a minister of the Gospel

**NORBERTINE COMMUNITY OF
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Please remember us
in YOUR WILL -
that our work may
continue...

Comings and Goings....

We have new seasonal books for the liturgy of the hours (morning and evening prayer)...Our cantor **Fr. Vincent DeLeers** has been patient with us as we struggle to learn all nine new psalm tones...**Fr. Steven Rossey**, our Norbertine brother from St. Norbert Abbey and liturgical environment designer extraordinaire, was invited as a consultant on the environment in our church during the different liturgical seasons...**Fr. Gene Gries** spent much of the summer monitoring the extensive renovation of the family center and parish offices at Holy Rosary where we serve...Retreatants from a wide variety of states including New Jersey, Missouri, Rhode Island, California came to the Hermitage Retreat this summer...**Fr. Roberto Fenzl** preached for our mission work in Peru in Minnesota, Massachusetts, and California...**Br. Dennis Butler** helped prepare the environment at the National Convention of Religious Brothers which was held in Albuquerque this summer.

Fr. Ray Riordan from the Norbertine abbey of Kilnecrot in Ireland and **Fr. Batt Desmond**, his diocesan priest companion were our guests for ten days in July...**Fr. Jim Huth**, our graduate student working on his doctoral dissertation in ethics at the University of Toronto, visited the priory for ten days and met with some of his former colleagues in pastoral care ministry at the Albuquerque Medical Center before returning to school...**Tom and Luci Phelan**, good friends of the community, who lived for 15 years in Albuquerque after Tom's retirement from the Philosophy Department at St. Norbert College in Wisconsin, moved to Colorado to be closer to family...**Megan McKenna**, a peripatetic theologian and a major donor of books to our library, was our guest for dinner...We joined our **Archbishop Michael Sheehan** this summer to celebrate his 20th anniversary as bishop. Currently Archbishop Michael is the leader of the Archdiocese of Sante Fe AND the diocese of Phoenix, Arizona.

Fr. Fran Dorff has been particularly creative in his writing projects recently completing a trilogy of manuscripts on the psalms. The manuscripts are entitled *Songs for the Souls: A Life Process Approach to the Psalms*, *Soul Songs to God: A Haiku Psalter*, and *Seeds for Soulful Living: A Meditative Approach to the Psalms*. The trilogy develops a methodology for internalizing the richness of the psalms...**Adam Gonzalez**, a young Carmelite seminarian, preparing for solemn vows made a six week hermitage retreat. Happily he was a musician and volunteered to play our keyboard for our singing of the liturgy of the hours.

