



From the Prior's Desk An Ecumenical Movement to Revitalize the



For some years now members of the Norbertine Community and the Pastoral Counselors at the Samaritan Counseling Center, a faith-based therapy center in Albuquerque, have had a personal and professional relationship. That relationship has led to an exciting collaborative effort.

In March, 2001, after three years of planning and preparation, we launched an ecumenical pilot program aimed at fostering spiritual vitality among the clergy in New Mexico. Named *Called Back to the Well*, and held at the Center of Spiritual Life of our Priory, the project provided opportunities and guidance for pastors to revitalize their ministries by drawing upon the resources of prayer, silence, psychology, and community in a four-day retreat setting.

The evaluative data that derived from these retreats indicated that the retreats helped participating clergy manage the stress of life in ministry more effectively and deepened their commitment to pastoral excellence.

Encouraged by this feedback, Dr. Paul Hopkins wrote a grant proposal to the Lilly Foundation suggesting a five year program for spiritual revitalization of clergy in five states in the Southwest. *Called Back to the Well* aims to foster excellence in ministry by cultivating in 300 participating clergy vital prayer and spiritual practice integrated with the resources of psychology and community.

In early December we learned that the Lilly Foundation had awarded the Samaritan Counseling Center in partnership with the Norbertine Community of New Mexico a \$686,000 grant to pursue this project. We, of course, were deeply pleased at being chosen for the grant. Only sixty three grants out of 730 applicants were awarded.

At the end of January, four members of our committee (Dr. Paul Hopkins Director of the Samaritan Counseling Center, Dr. Sara Brennan, Clinical Director at the Center, Presbyterian Pastor Joyce Lieberman, a participant in our pilot retreats, and I) flew to Indianapolis to take part in a two day *Sustaining Pastoral Excellence* conference. We were energized by the quality of the conference and the interaction with other grant recipients from around the country. We were deeply encouraged by the desire to contribute to the revitalization of the clergy across Christian denominations and through them the parishes and congregations they serve.

While we were there, we conducted telephone interviews with prospective candidates for the position of Director of the *Called Back to the Well* project. In February, after several face to face interviews, we will hire the project Director who will begin to launch this creative endeavor in March.

My Norbertine brother, Fr. Fran Dorff, who for many years has ministered to clergy and who was a key presenter in our pilot retreats, will give much of his energy to this five year project. We invite your prayer that we will be successful in contributing to the movement of the spiritual revitalization of the clergy ecumenically in our area of the country.

Fr. Joel Garner, O.Praem.

Liturgy of the Hours

Each day, except Saturday, in our beautiful church of Santa Maria de la Vid, we pray the Liturgy of the Hours. At 7:00 a.m. we pray Morning Prayer (Lauds) and at 6:00 p.m. we pray Evening Prayer (Vespers).

Liturgy is simply a celebration of Christian life or the “Spiritual Life”, and the same is true of the Liturgy of the Hours. It is no more and no less than a communal celebration of what we are, or rather of what we have become and are ever becoming in Christ. And we do it in common because all Christian life is a shared life, a group life. Throughout Christian history, groups have gathered to express in ritual and feast their common vision of what they are, because this is one of the ways of *being* it. A community that does nothing as a community is not a community.



But if what we are as a community is the Body of Christ, and if the eternally present Christ is an everlasting hymn of praise and glory before the throne of the Father, it is our vocation to enter into this salvific event; to live the Christ-life of priestly praise and glory. And so the Church, as His body, associates herself with the eternal priestly prayer of Christ.

Traditionally, Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer (Lauds and Vespers) have been the principal moments of the Liturgy of the Hours. At the start of the day, we do as Jesus did (Mark 1:35), we begin the day with prayer. In Morning Prayer, we renew our commitment to

Christ by consecrating the day through thanks and praise. The very hour we celebrate provides a symbol, the rising sun, one of the ongoing marvels of God’s creation, a source of life and food, warmth and light, and leads spontaneously to praise and thanks, and to prayer for protection throughout the day. Since we celebrate what we are (and our core reality is that we have been saved by the saving death and resurrection of Jesus) the rising sun calls to mind that true Sun of Justice, in whose rising we receive the light of salvation. Another part of our celebration is the exercise of our priestly intercession for the whole world, for as Christ’s body we share in his responsibilities as well.

In the evening, after the day’s work is done, we turn once more to God in prayer. The passing of the day into night reminds us of the darkness of Christ’s passion and death, and the passing nature of all earthly creation. But the Vesper candle remind us again of Christ, the Light of the World. With Vespers we close the day.

As in Morning Prayer, the liturgy of Evening Prayer closes with intercessions for the needs of all humankind, and then in the collect and final blessing we thank God for the graces of the day, above all for the grace of the Risen Christ.

In the evening, we ask pardon for the sins of the day and request protection during the coming night, for we are exhorted in the sacred scriptures, “Do not let the sun go down on your anger and give no opportunity to the devil... let all bitterness and wrath and anger be put away from you... and be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, as God and Christ forgave you.” The motivation is clear “for we are members of one another.” (Ephesians 4:25-32)

So, Morning Prayer dedicates the new day to God, and Evening Prayer, at the close of the day, leads us to reflect on the hours just past, with thanksgiving for the good they have brought and the sorrow for evil we may have done. These hours frame our day and they are ritual moments in which we remember all who are linked with us. They are ritual moments in which we remember you. 

Ministry to

In the early 1990’s, two members of the pastoral team at the Norbertine Parish of Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary had a dream. Fr. Dominic Rossi and Deacon Juan Barajas dreamed of welcoming newcomers to our country and to New Mexico. In order to welcome them into our parish, they began by inviting immigrants from around Albuquerque to celebrate the Eucharist at Holy Rosary.

On the first Sunday forty immigrants responded to the invitation. That Eucharist has grown to 500-700 participants each Sunday through the year. An increasing number of families seeking involvement at Holy Rosary is a significant manifestation that the dream is being realized.

Each Thursday evening, a *Noche Hispana* is held in the Family Center at Holy Rosary. A hundred adults gather for prayer and learning. Seventy teenagers participate in the youth group and two hundred children take Religious Education classes.

In addition, fifteen adult participants in the R.C.I.A. (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) process and twenty children in the R.C.I.C. (Rite of Christian Initiation of Children) process were initiated into the Catholic Community last Easter.

The pastoral team has been working hard on many levels to build bridges between the newcomers and the seasoned members of Holy Rosary Parish. Two members of the immigrant community now serve on the Parish Pastoral Council. Father Rod “Roberto” Fenzl, a Norbertine who served in the Lima, Peru mission for 34 years, serves the immigrants at Holy Rosary as well as in other communities in Albuquerque. 

Prison Encuentro



Twice a year, a relatively unknown but quite remarkable event takes place in Albuquerque when a group of

approximately 35-40 inmates (mostly young men) from the central New Mexico correctional facility come together for a spiritual retreat. This prison is located in Los Lunas, (about 20 miles from our priory), and all who participate are from the minimum security section of the institution.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of this spiritual exercise is the fact that permission is granted to these men to leave the prison environment and spend three days at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish which has generously housed the retreat. It is true that all participants are minimum security folks. Nevertheless, the prison authorities must be given credit for their cooperation with this program over the years.

The idea of promoting *Encuentros* was born in the early 1980's in the wake of the devastating prison riot that took place in the old Santa Fe prison. The then Archbishop, Robert Sanchez, encouraged and supported a small group of Cursillistas to undertake this special mission and promote a sense of spirituality badly needed in the prison.

It was with a great deal of difficulty that the Cursillo was adapted to meet this particular need. A small, committed group of Cursillistas persisted in adapting the Cursillo, and the first *Encuentro* took place *inside* the prison in Santa Fe in 1983. Since that time more changes were introduced into the movement. With the *Encuentro* in May of this past year a total of 48 encounters have been available for the spiritual revitalization of the inmates who freely chose to participate. The *Encuentro* team is also very grateful to

Archbishop Michael Sheehan who has been very supportive of prison ministry in all its forms. Archbishop Sheehan himself frequently visits the prisons in New Mexico.

Through my own experience I have come to believe strongly that "faith-based" groups play a critical role in prison ministry today. In spite of the often negative attitude that some people have regarding prisons and inmates, the fact is that many people, particularly young people, who end up in prison do come to grips with their lives during that difficult time. They begin to realize their mistakes and are ready for some kind of conversion. Faith-based programs provide a haven for these inmates who want to work on changing their lives. We have found that the inmates who sign up for the *Encuentros* really want to be there with the hope of finding new meaning and a greater depth in their lives.

Many of the inmates who participate in the retreats have learned to name their "demons". They are able to say: "This is my sin". This kind of honesty helps them to begin to move toward healing.

When I began to make my visits to Lurigancho prison outside of Lima, Peru, more than 25 years ago, I remember telling my Norbertine brothers, kiddingly, that I went to do ministry in the prison just for the sheer pleasure of being able to walk out of that place a few hours later with a feeling of freedom that I did not appreciate a few hours earlier when I went inside.

I am deeply moved that four of the men on the team that organized the first *Encuentro* at the prison in Santa Fe in 1983 are still actively involved in the organization of *Encuentro* to this day.

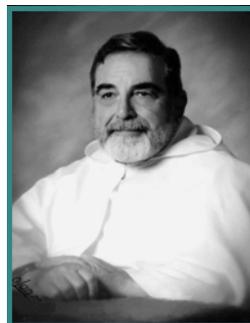
My experience in prison ministry over

the years has made me more aware of the dreadful conditions under which many people are forced to live in the world today, especially poor people. I have discovered that "life is truly not fair". My experience with inmates has led me to a better understanding and appreciation of the freedom my own faith offers to me. And maybe, just maybe, this recognition had its initiation in that "freedom" I felt years ago the first time I walked out of that prison at Lurigancho in Peru.

Fr. Roberto Fenzl, O.Praem. served 34 years as a missionary in Peru before coming to New Mexico.



RCIA & Me



One day, fourteen years ago, Fr. Joel said to me, "Would you be open to helping Sr. Eva in RCIA. I think you'd be good at it." I said, "What's that?" He said, "You know, helping people who want to become Catholic." I said, "Sure." and before I knew it Sr. Eva and I were flying off to Oklahoma City to attend a week's seminar on RCIA.

If you are like me, your initiation into the Catholic faith was by memorizing the Baltimore Catechism. (Or, in my case, refusing to memorize the Baltimore Catechism.) Well, the Second Vatican Council recommended that the Church renew its way of receiving adults. A revised rite, inspired by the way candidates were received into the early Church, was approved by Pope Paul VI in 1972. It was called the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, hence RCIA. It has become the norm for the Church. RCIA stresses formation in doctrine, liturgy, Church life, and service.

So, in 1990, I became an RCIA team member.

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**NORBERTINE COMMUNITY OF
NEW MEXICO**

Santa Maria de la Vid Priory
5825 Coors Road, SW
Albuquerque, NM 87121-6700

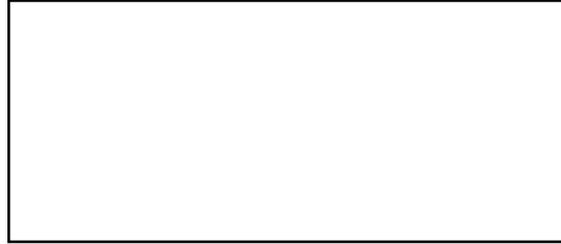
Phone: 505-873-4399

Fax: 505-873-4667

Email: norbertines@norbertinecommunity.org
www.norbertinecommunity.org

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that our work may
continue...**

RCIA & Me (continued)

The beginning step of the RCIA process is called Inquiry. This is where the candidates are encouraged to ask questions about the Church, share their own faith stories, and decide whether they wish to continue. Some do and some don't.

For those who do, there is the Rite of Acceptance which is celebrated before the parish community. They then participate in Catechesis, during which the Catechists and other team members share their faith with the candidates, introduce them to the liturgy, and explore with them the weekly readings of the Sunday Mass. This is where I've spent most of my time as a team member. It's been a very rewarding experience. One can watch from week to week the candidates grow in their faith and love of God.

One man said to me, "If anyone had told me a couple of months ago that I'd be spending two or three hours each week at church, I'd have told him he was crazy. But I do. And I like it."

Another man had bounced around from no faith to fundamental Protestantism, to Buddhism, to the Episcopalian Church (he liked their singing and couldn't understand why we didn't meet their standards of singing. Well, we try.) He found a home in our Catholic Church.

There was the single mother who found meaning and dignity for her life. And at the Easter Vigil when she received her sacraments she couldn't stop crying for joy.

There was a former gang member who couldn't stop crying, too. Every Sunday he brings his family to mass. They sit in the front row and both he and his wife seem to be wrapped in prayer. Of course, their little boy and girl have other priorities.

Sometimes it seems an awful lot of crying goes on, especially at the Easter Vigil. And it's not just the candidates. I've seen several of the team members shedding tears at various stages of the process.

Of course, I never cry.

I could go on and on, anecdote after anecdote, about these past 14 years, but I won't.

I'd like to invite everyone who has the time to consider joining the RCIA team in your parish. No matter what your qualifications are, you would be a valuable asset to the team. And you might be the catalyst that turns someone else's life around. You might even find yourself off in a corner pretending that you're not crying.

Brother Dennis Butler, O.Praem.



Spring Retreats by Fr. Fran Dorff, O. Praem.

Feb. 28—*Last Night I Died*

Mar. 13—*Soul Stirring*

Mar. 26-28—*Living the Songs of Your Soul*

Apr. 30-May 2—*Toward Living Wisely*

May 14-16—*Spiritual Pilgrims*