



From the Prior's Desk An International Meeting of Norbertines: A Rich Experience



Br. Bob, Abbot General Thomas, Fr. Joel

Brother Robert Campbell and I represented our priory this summer at a two week international meeting of Norbertines in

Freising, Germany. This international gathering is held every six years and Norbertines from six different continents (Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, North America, and South America) were in attendance. They represented 34 autonomous abbeys and a number of priories throughout the world.

Since our tradition of religious life is almost nine hundred years old, the fruit of such a gathering is not only a sense of our long history but also a chance to interact with our brothers from a whole host of cultures. Among the topics discussed, with simultaneous translation in six languages provided, were secularization (particularly in Europe and America), the exciting development of lay associates in relationship to our communities, and the acceptance of an Order-wide mission statement.

For many of our Abbeys, particularly in Europe, it has been a bumpy ride through the centuries. After the founding of our first Abbey in the valley of Premontre in France in the early 12th century, hundreds of Norbertine houses were founded across Europe. However, the Protestant Reformation, the suppression of religious life during the French Revolution in 1789, the closing of Abbeys in Germany in 1803, the Nazi occupation of Abbeys during World War II, and the communist take over of other Abbeys in 1950 in Eastern Europe, reduced the presence of Norbertines on that continent significantly. Despite those difficult historical moments, many Abbeys went on to be re-founded.

As a result of the kindness and the car of Abbot Thomas Secuianu of the Abbey of Frigolet in France, three of us were able to travel with him to visit former Norbertine Abbeys in Bavaria and then travel across the Alps to the Abbey of Wilten in Innsbrook, Austria. We continued

our journey through Italy to the southern coast of France and spent several days at the Abbey of Abbot Thomas. Frigolet Abbey is near Avignon, where seven different Popes lived outside of Rome during the 14th century.

A Eurrail Pass enabled us to travel by train to Paris where we lived with the Redemptorist community and visited the Eiffel Tower, the Arc de Triomphe, the Louvre, and then worshipped at the world famous Cathedral of Notre Dame.

We were touched by a visit to the valley of Premontre, northwest of Paris, where our first abbey was founded. Here remains an early 12th century ruin of the Chapel of John the Baptist where Norbert and his companions had made their commitment to God and to one another to initiate our almost nine hundred year tradition. To visit the very spot where our religious tradition began was a real highlight.

The final days were spent on the coast of Normandy at our Abbey of Mondaye with a group of Norbertines who sing the Liturgy of the Hours magnificently in French. We celebrated the Feast of the Assumption on August 15th with them. It was also on that day that we traveled to both the German and American cemeteries only 20 miles away to pay our respect to those who died during World War II. At the German cemetery, where over twenty thousand young Germans are buried, a plaque reads: "Many of these soldiers did not choose the fight or the cause."

In the American cemetery, nine thousand three hundred and eighty seven Americans are buried. Each grave is marked by a Cross or, for Jewish soldiers, the Star of David. One can not help but be sobered and deeply moved at the cost of so many young lives. In one of the cemeteries a plaque held a quote from the great humanitarian, Albert Schweitzer, which read: "The graves of soldiers are the greatest preachers of peace." I could only add "Amen". Both Brother Bob and I considered the meeting and the travel the gift of a lifetime.

Fr. Joel Garner, O.Praem.

Preaching for the Missions often Among Immigrants



By Fr. Roberto Fenzl

One of the unexpected blessings in my life in the past six years has been related to making appeals for the Norbertine mission work in Peru and India. I say *unexpected* because the thought of becoming a “mission preacher” had never ever crossed my mind. However, the changing reality of our times and the *Church* has influenced our own thinking as well.

In the year 2000, a Jubilee Year, and after 34 deeply satisfying years of mission activity in Peru, I returned to Santa Maria de la Vid Priory to become a member of the community and participate in our community ministries in New Mexico. I was interested in Hispanic Ministry, prison ministry, hospital work... but mission preaching was not originally on my list of preferences.

Also, at that same time, our Mission Office at St. Norbert Abbey began to receive an increasing number of invitations from *Hispanic* parishes to preach at the Masses and make our mission appeal. The Mission Office called me and asked if I would be willing to help with visits to some of the Hispanic parishes. I consulted with Fr. Joel and he agreed that it might be a good idea to participate and I did.

Since my return from Peru (2000), I have had the opportunity to visit approximately 43 parishes ... all Hispanic. Of these visits, most (32) have been in California and of these the majority (21) are located within the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. To be sure, every parish has its own special features and within each parish, each Mass has its own “personality”. But the parishes that I have visited have certain features in common:

- 1) All are Hispanic parishes with an ever increasing number of Hispanic Catholics.
- 2) Many of these parishes are approaching a 4/4 English/Spanish Mass ratio with Spanish Masses are usually the best attended, and growing in attendance.

- 3) Hispanic Masses are not “liturgically” brilliant and liturgical music is not a high priority. In spite of liturgical limitations people keep coming, and in larger numbers.

- 4) None of the parishes that I visited can be called “wealthy” parishes. In fact, one parish visited draws a subsidy from the Diocese.

- 5) The people are all very friendly, very welcoming, and within their means, very generous.

This has turned out to be a wonderful and also an enlightening experience for a number of reasons.

First of all, I found it easy to talk about mission and mission outreach in the church. Today, that is much of what church is all about. I also felt that my past experience in Peru gave me something to share with the immigrants (principally Hispanic) that have become so much a part of reality in the church today. The people seem to buy the idea that our church is a mission church. They support the idea of being in solidarity with other poor struggling people. I feel this is a universal sentiment.

About 20 years ago, a devastating earthquake took place in Peru with the epicenter in the Andes Mountains. No major cities were affected, but some of the small, poor, peasant communities were hit very hard. One village called Maca, a very poor community located high in the bleak, austere, highlands of the Andes was practically wiped out. Many people died, most of the homes were destroyed, and the peasants, who had little to begin with, lost most of their possessions.

The Bishops of Peru immediately called upon all of the parishes to help the victims of Maca, and we will never forget the fine response from our parishes. The parishioners were very generous. Even poor communities that would have been excused from the collection wanted to do something to help Maca. I will always remember a wonderful incident that took

place at our parish San Marcos, not a wealthy community, but very good people.

We had a second collection at all of the Masses. In addition, people also brought clothes, canned food, and some medicine that had not expired. We finished the last Mass in which the people had responded beautifully. The catechists were busy arranging everything, and all were very satisfied with the project of the day, namely, coming to the aid of the poor in Maca.

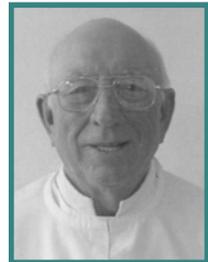
Then came the *play* of the day. A little kid, maybe 9 or 10 years old, who had been selling his *caramelos* (candy-lemon drops) after all of the morning Masses to help his needy family, came running into church with a fist full of change in one hand and some weather beaten candy in the other. He came up to me and said, “Padre...this is what I earned today and here is some candy. I want to give it to the poor kids of Maca”. Knowing the family and their needs, I was reluctant to accept, but one of the catechists interrupted and said, “Padre, you have to accept it. It is his offering for the poor kids”. And indeed, she was right! I accepted the offering that was about 35 cents in U.S. currency and some semi-weathered lemon drops.

I have never forgotten that incident: a poor kid, very generously helping other poor children. As time goes on, and although I clearly recall the faces and place, the incident itself has developed into a kind of metaphor that I see it repeated often in the mission appeal: generous, poor people willing to reach out and join in to help other poor people. Mission outreach at its best.

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Fifty Years as a Norbertine Priest, Teacher and Missionary

Norbertine Professes Simple Vows



Fr. Nicholas Nirschl, O.Praem celebrated fifty years of service as a Norbertine priest on August 31, 2006. A native of Milwaukee, Wisconsin he entered the Norbertine

Order on August 28, 1951 and was ordained to the priesthood on August 31, 1956. Fr. Nick holds a B.S. degree in Mathematics from St. Norbert College as well as an M.A. and Ph.D. degree in Mathematics from the University of Wisconsin in Madison. He served on the faculties of both St. Norbert High School and St. Norbert College in DePere, Wisconsin.

While on Sabbatical in the mid-1970's at New Mexico State University, Fr. Nick developed a love for the Hispanic culture. Subsequently, for seventeen years Fr. Nick worked with the Padres Norbertinos in San Juan de Lurigancho, a marginalized district east of Lima, Peru. Among other activities he helped established a new parish and a number of mission stations for tens of thousands of people arriving every year from the mountains and jungles, escaping the poverty and terrorism there.

In June, 1995, Fr. Nick returned to the United States and was welcomed as an addition to the Norbertine Foundation in Albuquerque. He served as pastor of St. Augustine parish at Isleta Pueblo for the next seven years. Currently, Fr. Nick resides at Santa Maria de la Vid Priory in Albuquerque and continues to help in a number of parishes in the Albuquerque area.



Fr. John M. Tourangeau, O.Praem. professed simple vows of poverty, celibacy and obedience at St. Norbert Abbey Church in De

Pere, Wisconsin on the feast of St. Augustine, August 28, 2006. Fr. John is presently the pastor of St. Anne Parish in Albuquerque.

Born in Escanaba, Michigan, Fr. John holds a B.A. in Sociology from St. Norbert College, and M. Div. in Missiology from Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. He was ordained a priest of the Norbertine Community in June of 1986 and subsequently became a priest of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe in June, 1989. As a priest he has served

at Holy Rosary parish in Albuquerque, St. Gertrude parish in Mora, St. Helen parish in Clovis and San Francisco de Assis parish in Ranchos de Taos.

Fr. John took a leave of absence from the priesthood for five years before returning to the service of the diocese and a re-connection with the Norbertine Community. In the interim he received a Masters degree in Social work from Highlands University and a MBA from University of Phoenix. Fr. John lives with his Norbertine brothers at Santa Maria de la Vid Priory in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Fr. John is the son of Roger and his step-mother, Betty, who belong to Holy Family Parish in Flat Rock, Michigan.

New Norbertine Novice



Fr. Anthony Maes was initiated into the Norbertine Community of Santa Maria de la Vid Priory in Albuquerque, New Mexico, during First

Vespers of the Feast of St. Augustine on August 27, 2006. The Priory is a daughter house of St. Norbert Abbey in Wisconsin - - an order of Canons Regular following the Rule of St. Augustine.

Born in Albuquerque, New Mexico, Fr. Anthony holds a degree from the former I.H.M. Seminary in Santa Fe and Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas. He was ordained a priest of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe in 1982 and subsequently took a leave of absence in 1988. For the last eighteen years he has served as a teacher and an administrator in the Albuquerque Public School system.

For the last five years he has been a member of a small group of associates of the Norbertine Community in New Mexico. With the blessing of Archbishop Michael Sheehan he has now entered into the formation process of the Norbertine Community and will make his Novitiate at the Holy Spirit House of Studies in Chicago, Illinois. He is the son of Maria and the late Henry Maes of Annunciation Parish in Albuquerque.



Reception of the Norbertine Habit

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Preaching (from page 2)

On the basis of what I see happening, I feel very optimistic about the Church of the future. It is quite obvious that in our country the immigrant laws and policies are flawed and inadequate, to say the least. The immigrants are generally treated badly and they are often not well received. And yet these are the people that I see coming to Church and who obviously want to be part of and contribute to the formation of the Christian community. Good people, no doubt about it...very generous people. Basically they come and will continue to come if they are made to feel welcomed.

Several years ago I did the appeal in Salinas, California. It was another fine immigrant parish. The visit there was memorable. I was there a few days and all of a sudden, I realized that, Hey, there is no English spoken in this parish. Not in the rectory, not in the parish office complex and except for one sparsely attended English Sunday liturgy, there was simply no English spo-

ken. The six Sunday Masses (Spanish) were celebrated before a full house, all from the immigrant community. This is the reality in the USA today.

I honestly feel that the Church is responding in different degrees and in different ways in different parishes and parts of the country. For the future, however, it would behoove us to be alert to creative programs and develop skilled pastoral leadership in service of the immigrants. Cardinal Mahoney once described the reality of the church today in Los Angeles as *the changing face of the Church*. Time will tell it all.

I can't help but think of what Yogi Berra, ex-player and manager of the New York Yankees, once said when he was asked about the future of a couple of rookies who were struggling through spring training. A reporter asked Yogi if these rookies would survive the cut. Yogi defended these young players. He said that they had the ability, but would have to work hard, and, he added, "we have to remember that their future is still ahead of them".

Initiation of Norbertine Oblates

At First Vespers of the Feast of St. Augustine, Louise Nielsen and Timothy Schumacher were initiated as oblate novices of the Priory of Santa Maria de la Vid. Oblates propose to offer themselves to the Priory in order to accept the responsibility of a more uniquely personal participation in the Norbertine charisms of community, contemplation, and compassionate service, within the limits of their personal circumstances.

Louise initiated the Norbertine Associates, a lay movement that identifies with the spirituality of the Norbertine Community. She is a teacher in Rio Rancho and the wife of Donn Nielsen. They have one daughter, Kelsey. Tim has a decades long relationship with the Norbertines. He is presently a manager at the Wild Oats Market in Albuquerque. Both are active members of Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Parish in Albuquerque.