



For the last ten years we have had a Long-Range Planning Committee that has guided the planning of our Priory of Santa Maria de la Vid (Our Lady of the Vine). For over a

year now this committee, with our architect Robert Habiger, has guided the community in developing a plan for Phase II of our growth.

Underlying this plan for our next building phase is a celebration of progress. As we step back and witness the wonder of what has evolved in our short history, we are deeply moved by the many ways we have been blessed. For over two decades we have participated in helping shape the lives of diverse people and institutions.

Likewise, those we have served have shaped and contributed to us. So it is with a sense of gratitude that we begin to detail a plan for two new buildings on our Priory property that will move us closer to realizing a Norbertine Abbey in the great Southwest.

Our first building is a Residence-Living Center. Our priests and brothers respond to the many calls within the vast New Mexico community for guidance through the journeys of life. When our work is done, we return home to Santa Maria de la Vid Priory for rest and renewal to be re-energized for ministry. Our home is the heart of this sacred place in which we live. As our community grows, so too grows our need for expanded living quarters for our priests and brothers.

Our ministry demands that we continue learning over a lifetime. There is an urgent call within the Southwest region for knowledge that delves deeply into the Catholic and Judeo-Christian tradition. Our plan is to build a Library-Spiritual Learning Center that focuses on scriptural, theological and spiritual resources. This is a response to the relative absence of such resources within the state of New Mexico.

The Library-Spiritual Learning Center will serve three main functions. First, it will bolster our ability to offer appropriate resources for the

students enrolled in the Master of Theological Studies program of St. Norbert College on our New Mexico campus. The graduates of this program are the future leaders of faith communities in the Southwest and are at present already providing a variety of services.

Second, in the tradition of abbeys through the centuries, this library will enhance Norbertine learning through our ability to respond with intellectual vigor to the difficult issues of our time. Finally, the library will strengthen our ecumenical outreach and serve as a place for revitalizing interfaith dialogue as well as serve the needs of our retreatants.

The Library-Spiritual Learning Center will contain a reception area, an office, three spiritual direction and counseling rooms, a seminar room, an archives, and shelf space to hold twenty thousand volumes.

We adopted a three phase building strategy in 1995. Phase I was the building of the church as well as the office and spiritual direction facilities which were completed in 1998. The Residence-Living Center and Library-Spiritual Learning Center comprise Phase II of our development.

Our master plan includes a Phase III development at our Priory with the building of additional Residence-Living Centers and an expanded Dining Room-Community Room facility. We do not plan to implement this phase for a decade or two.

The total cost for Phase II is \$2,700,000. To date, through the generosity of our donor friends, we have raised \$1,913,000. Included within this plan is our strategy for raising the remainder of the funds through the generosity of other donor friends as well as seeking grants from foundations. We have been deeply gratified at the support we have already received since the initiation of our capital campaign in October, 2005.

Fr. Joel Garner, O.Praem.

Norbertine Affiliate: A Formative Stage in Discerning a Call



By Tony Wilimitis

A simple Ritual of Affiliation at Evening Prayer initiates an inquirer into a next stage of discerning a call to religious life and priesthood. My reflections are framed

by the questions asked at that Ritual of Affiliation.

Br. Dennis: Let him who wishes to become an affiliate of the Community of Santa Maria de la Vid please stand.

That'd be me. My name is Tony Wilimitis. I have a background in Philosophy and Classical Languages from St. Meinrad College (an all-male Benedictine school) in Indiana and experience in an assortment of professions (e.g., restaurant waiter, school teacher, boilermaker, and residential builder.) I am originally from Indiana but have been living in New Mexico for the last 5 years.

Last October, I was employed by the Archdiocese of Santa Fe as the producer of the local Catholic radio talk show, "The Archbishop's Hour," and started my affiliate period with the Norbertines last November. Now, I know what you're thinking... "what's a high-level media executive (wink! wink!) like *you* doing in a place like *this*?" Well, to find out, you'll have to read on!

Fr. Joel: Are you willing to enter the next stage of your discernment by becoming a formal affiliate of the Community of Santa Maria de la Vid?

Candidate: I am.

Being single, in love with Christ, passionate about my Catholic Faith, and having had questions about a religious vocation in the Church since I was in college (11 years ago), I have been in conversation with Fr. Joel Garner over the course of a few years, usually seeking his spiri-

tual advice and occasionally just being refreshed by spending time with the Norbertines at community prayer times and supper. It was during one of those conversations with Fr. Joel a couple months ago that he invited me to become an affiliate of the community. This was offered as a more intense, yet un-obligated, way of helping my vocation discernment along.

Fr. Joel: Will you continue to discern the will of God through your conversations, your study, and your private and communal prayer?

Candidate: I will.

At the time, I was looking for a tool that would provide a more solid foundation for real resolution of the vocation question in my life. I realized that I could benefit from tapping more often into the life of this religious community with its prayer, fraternity, and quiet surroundings. In addition, I would be joining a discussion group of other affiliates, men seeking answers to similar questions in life. Also, I would take up residence with the community and live in the house of these followers of Jesus.

My job with Catholic Radio allows me time to attend daily Morning Prayer, Mass, Evening Prayer, and the community evening meal. While the other members of the community go to their respective ministries after Eucharist (Holy Rosary Parish, St. Pius High School, local hospitals, and at the priory,) I go to the radio studio. Then, in the evenings, we all return in time for Evening Prayer.

Fr. Joel: Will you accept for your reflection and meditation a copy of the Mission Statement of our Priory which expresses our identity and our vision?

Candidate: I will.

My older brother (as older brothers will do) overstates my presence here as if to

say I'm already an ordained priest! That just simply isn't the case. All I've done is take an intentional step toward making some decisions about where I think God is leading me. I knew that my own journey toward any vocation in the Church would not have a well-laid foundation unless I worked to restore my daily prayer life like it's lived here. I believe God called me here to use this time to come to some serious conclusions about the rest of my life. What a blessed opportunity and a great grace, then, it is to find myself at this point. I thank my God for this and for the brothers I now have in the Norbertine Community.

Fr. Joel: May God grant you wisdom. May the Holy Spirit guide and strengthen you that in this and in all things you may do God's will in the service of the Kingdom now and forever. (Final blessing of the Rite of Affiliation of the Norbertine Community of Santa Maria de la Vid.)

The Mission of SMDLV Priory Given to Affiliates

The Risen Christ sends us as modern apostles to witness to the reality and the power of a Christian community of faith by living a simple, communal life according to the rule of Augustine and the ancient traditions of the Order of Premontre, and by giving loving service to the Church of Santa Fe, especially to its poor and needy.

Stages in Norbertine Formation

An **Inquirer** into Norbertine life often makes several visits. This is followed by a period of **Affiliation** where the candidate lives with the community for a time while working or still going to school. The

(continued on page 4)

Pax Christi at Holy Rosary Parish

By Lisa Ford

Last year, I had the privilege of helping form a *Pax Christi* group at the Norbertine parish of Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary. *Pax Christi* is the grass root organization often referred to as the “Catholic peace movement.” Through prayer, study and peaceful action, members of *Pax Christi* work to end violence, as it exists at all levels of society, and in particular, at the institutional level. We work to end the death penalty, nuclear weapons production, and, of course militarization and war.

Interest by parish members was far greater than expected. With attendance ranging from 10-25 people, the group meets twice a month. One meeting is devoted to reading, reflection and discussion on Christ’s gift of peace and on how we, as Christians, can implement the gospel mandate to love our enemy. Our discussions are lively, and often difficult, given current world events.

The other meeting is devoted to planning “actions.” Our group has been particularly active in the areas of death penalty repeal and in the enactment of legislation regulating predatory lenders and pay day loan companies. We have engaged in silent prayer vigils in front of an atomic weapons museum and marched in opposition to the war in Iraq. In August, we were joined by 350 people from around the world who all wore sack clothes and ashes and sat in silent prayer of atonement outside Los Alamos National Laboratories on the 60th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima.

This year, in addition to the above activities, we will host a Nobel Peace Prize winner, Mairead Maguire, who will speak at the parish. Ms. Maguire is from Northern Ireland and, having suffered great loss, speaks powerfully on non-violent alternatives to conflict resolution.

Norbertine spirituality encompasses both prayer and action. As one of ten Norbertine Associates at Santa Maria de la Vid Priory, I am committed to try to live a life of radical discipleship, embracing Norbertine spirituality. Each Associate lives out this commitment in his or her unique manner.

I find the three pillars of *Pax Christi*, prayer, study and action, are an expression of Norbertine spirituality. Through prayer, *Pax Christi* members seek deeper union with God and a better understanding of His call to bring about the promised Kingdom. Through study, we candidly examine the world and address how, in practical terms, we can implement change. And, finally, through action, we physically engage the world, and work to shape it.

We are not always successful in our action. Social change is a daunting task. As a caring and socially concerned parish, Holy Rosary boldly faces this challenge. We are blessed to have the encouragement and support of the Norbertine Community as we endeavor to work for peace in our world.

Lisa Ford is an Albuquerque attorney and Norbertine Associate.



Holy Rosary parishioner letters opposing the death penalty were hand delivered by Lisa Ford and Michael Marciano during the *Pax Christi* meeting with Governor Richardson of New Mexico in December.

Fr. Jim Huth Returns to the Priory as Dr. Jim



Fr. Jim Huth successfully defended his doctoral dissertation at Regis College in Toronto, Canada, on January 20, 2006. A native of Illinois,

Jim graduated from St. Norbert College in 1978 with a degree in International Business. He subsequently pursued an MBA at Illinois Benedictine College before entering St. Norbert Abbey in 1981.

He was ordained a Norbertine Priest in 1986 after completing an M. Div. at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. Fr. Jim joined the community of Santa Maria de la Vid in 1988 and began as a member of the Pastoral Care Staff in the St. Joseph Hospital System in Albuquerque, NM.

In 1991, he pursued and was granted a Masters degree in Pastoral Care at St. Paul University in Ottawa, Canada. He returned to continue his ministry in the St. Joseph Hospital System from 1993 to 2000 and then returned to Canada to pursue his doctorate in theology with an emphasis in Medical Ethics.

Fr. Jim is presently teaching a graduate course in Ethics in St. Norbert College’s Masters of Theological Studies Program at its New Mexico campus. We are delighted to have Fr. Jim back with us with his specialized training in the many ethical questions which are now raised in the medical field.

NORBERTINE COMMUNITY OF NEW MEXICO

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in YOUR WILL -
that our work may
continue...

Stages (from page 2)

Novitiate is a formal stage of entry into the community. It lasts two years and is followed by three years of **Simple Vows** of poverty, chastity, and obedience. **Solemn Vows** is the final, definitive, and permanent commitment to Norbertine life. Most solemnly professed members continue the journey to ordination to the priesthood. **Ordination** take place after completing four years of theological study. Each stage of the formative process has its own ritual of transition to the next stage. 

Comings and Goings...

Fr. Larry Mayer with his special gifts of shaping the landscape continues to work outside in our environment everyday and the fruits of labors are becoming more and more obvious. In addition, Fr. Larry is leading a discussion group with our affiliates each month.... Fr. Fran Dorff led another successful seventy-two hour ecumenical retreat for clergy in the middle of January. It is entitled "Called

Back to the Well".... Abbot Benjamin T. Mackin, a former leader of St. Norbert Abbey who missioned us to make a new foundation of our community in New Mexico twenty years ago, died at the end of December 2005. Fr. Gene Gries, who spent some years as his prior, represented us at his funeral at St. Norbert Abbey.... A national liturgical magazine named *Rite* had a cover picture of the blessing of the new fire outside of Holy Rosary Church at the Easter Vigil. It also placed several pictures of the celebration of Sacraments of Initiation on that special night in its January issue.... Fr. Bijoy Francis and Fr. Binu Joseph, two newly ordained Norbertine priests from the community of Manathavady in India, will come to join our community in the Spring and serve in the Archdiocese of Santa Fe... . Fr. Andrew Ciferni, a Norbertine brother from Daylesford Abbey in Pennsylvania, taught a first interactive TV course for students of the Master of Theological Studies Program of St. Norbert College both in De Pere and in Albuquerque at the beginning of January. The course was *Liturgy and Pastoral Care*.... Fr. Gene Gries and Fr. Vincent DeLeers, members of the Board of Trustees at St.

Norbert College, attended a board meeting in early February on the campus in DePere Wisconsin....

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



February 18— *Faces of the Soul: A Mirror for Spiritual Direction*
March 17-19 — *The Flowering of the TreeCross: A Lenten Retreat in Meditative Writing*
March 25 — *Seeds for Living Soulfully: Practicing Mantric Prayer*
April 8 — *Walking in a Sacred Way: Responding to the Soul's Invitations*
May 5-7 — *The Soul's Dwelling Place: A Retreat in Meditative Writing*
May 20 — *The Strange Affair: On Falling in Love with God*

For more information call
(505) 873-4399.