

The Norbertine Community of Santa Maria de la Vid Priory now has an international character. On September 8, 2006, the Feast of the Nativity of Mary and the anniversary of our founding in 1985, Fr. Binu Joseph, O.Praem., and Fr. Bijoy Francis, O.Praem., arrived from India to become part of our community in New Mexico.

Their arrival is reflective of a larger trend of inviting priests to immigrate for service in the United States where vocations have lessened. They often come from countries in Asia, Africa and some Latin American countries where priests are in greater supply. These immigrant priests can now be found serving in dioceses across the country. Fr. Binu and Fr. Bijoy's coming to New Mexico is part of the new wave of missionaries coming to the U.S., but it also has a more personal twist.

A little over two years ago I visited the Norbertine community of Mananthavady in South India with our Abbot General Thomas. We were on an official visitation to the community, an event that happens every six years. The community of Mananthavady was also celebrating the 25th Anniversary of its founding, and thus was among the youngest and most vibrant communities of our Order. At the moment there are 55 priests and about 100 seminarians in that Indian community. The Abbot General and I visited all the local houses and interviewed all the men before writing a Visitation Report with its commendations and suggestions.

One of the challenges this young community faces is the financial support of its members, particularly those in formation. There were not enough income producing ministries in India, so about fifteen Norbertine priests were missioned to serve as parish priests in the diocese of Augsburg, Germany, where circumstances forced them to live outside of community.

As I reflected about my rich experience among my Indian Norbertine brothers during my long flight home, I pondered a proposal that I felt could have a win-win outcome for the Indian

Norbertines, the New Mexico Norbertines, and the Archdiocese of Santa Fe. I asked my community if they were willing to embrace two new Norbertines from India. Answer: Yes. I asked Archbishop Michael Sheehan if he could use two Indian Norbertines in service to the local church. Answer: Yes. I wrote to Fr. John, superior of the Mananthavady community, to ask whether he and his Council were willing to mission two young priests to live and minister with us. Answer: Yes.

When I learned who would be missioned, I was delighted for I remembered them both from our conversations during the visitation. Fr. Binu, now thirty years old, had been working with street children and running a shelter for them in Bangalore. Fr. Bijoy, now twenty-nine years old, was a deacon living and ministering in the Norbert house at Mananthavady preparing for his ordination to priesthood two months later.

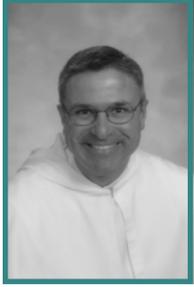
They have brought a youthful exuberance to our seasoned Norbertine community and have been participating generously in our life and ministry. Fr. Binu is the Catholic Chaplain on the Pastoral Care team at Presbyterian Hospital. Fr. Bijoy is the parochial vicar at St. Anne parish where our brother Fr. John Tourangeau is pastor.

They are now five months into this new communal, pastoral and cross-cultural adventure. They are negotiating the adjustments with up-beat spirits. Environment: from the tropics to the desert. Food: from spicy to more bland. Liturgy: from the Syro-Malabar rite in Malayalam to the Roman rite in English. Language: from their high-pitched English to an accent reduction program at the University of New Mexico. Relationships: from family and friends nearby to the same at a great distance.

Two of their New Mexico Norbertine brothers can empathize with their adjustments better than the rest of us. After some years of teaching in Wisconsin, Fr. Roberto Fenzl and Fr. Nick Nirschl were missioned to Peru for a combined 51 years of service. They have great stories to tell, as will Fathers Binu and Bijoy when they return to India.

Fr. Joel Garner, O.Praem.

My Vocation Story by Robert Campbell, O. Praem.



I am a “second career” vocation. I have taken a roundabout route into religious life by first establishing myself in the career of human services and education. In my mid 30’s, inspired by a natural desire to settle down and a need for spiritual deepening, I began exploring whether I might be called to religious life. More and more I came to see myself as a Norbertine, to feel this strange yet comforting sense of my vocation as a religious.

I think the ground was prepared for my vocation growing up in an Irish Catholic family in Massachusetts. Particularly inspiring was my grandmother’s faith which I remember to this day with awe. Nana was an old school Catholic whose later years were filled with devotions, novenas, and rosaries—prayers and practices which I admired but seemed shrouded in a mystical obscurity. Nana definitely helped foster an appreciation for mystery while my family’s Catholic fidelity ingrained in me a religious perspective as a matter of course.

I often reflected with my students during my teaching tenure at the local Catholic school that, for those of us baptized as babies and raised in the faith, our Catholicism is “in our bones.” It is part of our fundamental identity. We are naturally sacramental, almost instinctually seeking God’s actual presence in the world as He is actually present in the Eucharist. I am grateful to my family for this gift of sacramentality.

During undergraduate studies my sense of vocation deepened as I attended a private Catholic liberal arts institution called Stonehill College, run by the Holy Cross Fathers. I was inquisitive and majored in Philosophy. I took another step in my vocation journey when I attended a unique seminar on contemplation given by a Carthusian monk named Fr. Denis. I still vividly remember that sense of

amazement as he entered the room in his monk’s habit, but most striking was his peaceful blue eyes. You know those who are drinking from a deep spiritual well by gazing into their eyes.

We intuitively know when we are in the presence of soulful people, and I wanted what he had. I yearned for soulfulness, wisdom, and peace for my angst-ridden soul. I desired then (but didn’t know it) and seek now the kind of peace that only Christ can give. Fr. Denis mentioned that he became a monk after reading the great American Cistercian and spiritual writer, Thomas Merton. I voraciously read Merton and began meditating, and my sense of vocation deepened.

I discerned that I needed somehow to help people. So after college I embarked on a road that took me into the Peace Corp as a volunteer in Sierra Leone, West Africa. I later earned a master’s degree in education and performed my student teaching at a high school in Harlem. I taught autistic adolescents at a school for the deaf/blind founded by Helen Keller. My educational career took me from New York to Boston to the Green Mountains of Vermont and eventually to highly fulfilling work with developmentally disabled adults in Miami, Florida.

My final position was the director of an intensive program for adults with mental retardation and behavioral challenges in Dade County—the only one of it’s kind in South Florida. Yet, as I reflected on my life I remained unfulfilled. It was a strange feeling of being unsettled. I was doing what I loved and living my dream of helping people but there remained a spiritual emptiness which disturbed me.

In a search for the meaning to this desolation of spirit I enrolled in a graduate program training spiritual directors at St. Thomas University. The director of the program was surprised that I had simply walked in off the street since all those in the program were sponsored by their reli-

gious orders or their parishes. The program was wonderful, although I never really intended to be a spiritual director—I just wanted to figure myself out! I learned about spiritual journaling, and how to share my faith experiences with others in ways I was never able to before.

As I began talking about my relationship with God, I found the dryness disappearing. The entire second year of the program was spent studying and practicing the spiritual exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola and it was then that the image of that soulful monk I met in college vividly returned to me.

With the help of my spiritual director I began looking at religious orders and eventually made my way to the desert southwest to an obscure community called the Norbertines of New Mexico, and if you want to know what the feeling of discovering one’s true vocation is, I can only describe it as a powerful sense of *coming home*.

Now, as a solemnly vowed Norbertine, I am continuing my mission to help people but from a religious, faith-filled perspective I never had before. After several years of teaching as the department chair at St. Pius X high school I am now a chaplain at the local hospital in Albuquerque. I love being a chaplain. I am privileged to be with people at the most intense turning points in their lives: in moments of sickness and death, and times of healing and the birth of new life. I have blessed a premature baby that fit neatly in the palm of my hand, and held the hand of a woman who didn’t have to die alone because I was there for her. I am blessed and grateful for my vocation and for the support of this Norbertine community of friends that I call my brothers.

Ground Breaking for our Phase II Development at the Priory



Groundbreaking for Phase II at the Norbertine priory left to right: Fred Malcolm, Klinger Constructors; Robert Habiger, architect; and Fr. Joel Garner, O.Praem, prior, and Brother Robert Campbell, O.Praem.

On November 1st, the Feast of All Saints, the Norbertine Community of New Mexico broke ground for our Phase II development at Santa Maria de la Vid Priory in Albuquerque's South Valley.

The Norbertines are bearers of a religious tradition established in 1121 A.D. in the Valley of Premontre, France. Like St. Norbert's first followers, our priests, brothers, men in formation and lay associates are

dedicated to living, praying, and learning together on our journey into God. Active sharing in the heart and mind of Christ through liturgy, learning, and life is the Norbertine way.

The Phase II development will include two buildings: a Library-Spiritual Learning Center that focuses on scriptural, theological, and spiritual resources and a Residence-Living Center for Norbertines.

The Library-Spiritual Learning Center will serve three main functions. First, it will enable St. Norbert College to offer master's level resources to the students enrolled in its Master of Theological Studies program, which it offers on its New Mexico Campus. The graduates of this program are among the future leaders of faith communities in the Southwest and are at present already providing a variety of services.

Secondly, in the tradition of abbeys

through the centuries, it will enhance Norbertine learning and our ability to respond with intellectual rigor to difficult issues of our time.

Finally, it will strengthen our ecumenical outreach, serve as a place of revitalizing interfaith dialogue, and 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, and space for the archives. The stacks will have a capacity of twenty to twenty-five thousand volumes. The Library will also have the equipment and expertise to maintain internet contact with other libraries and resources. The Residence-Living Center will provide twelve rooms for Norbertines.

The building process will take from nine months to a year to complete.

Norbertine Associates: Connecting Across Time and Space

By Ken Griesemer



In 1121, St. Norbert brought together women and men in a community of faith at Premontre, France. In early September of 2001, a small group of women and men gathered in Albuquerque to form the Norbertine Associates of Santa Maria de la Vid Priory. We had little idea of how we would connect with our sisters and brothers in faith across time and space.

Today, we are experiencing an exciting new gathering of energy and effort which will deepen these connections between

professed Norbertines and Norbertine Associates in this country and overseas, and with those Norbertines who have gone before us in faith.

In the summer of 2005, Associates Louise Nielsen, Ken and Debbie Griesemer, and Anthony Maes traveled to the Abbey of St. Martin at Mondaye in northern France for the first international gathering of Norbertine Associates. At that four day meeting, marked by warm Norbertine hospitality, Associates and Vowed Norbertines from Europe and the United States gathered to pray, share faith, food, and wine.

The participants discussed the history and structure of their Associate or Third Order groups, noting the similarities and celebrating the differences. Toward the end of the meet-

ing, there was great interest in planning future gatherings on both the national and international level.

At the General Chapter of the Order at Freising, Germany in July of 2006, three representatives selected at the Mondaye meeting reported on the growing Associate movement. Just days before her death in Germany, Phyllis Martin, O. Praem. Obl. of the Daylesford Abbey in Pennsylvania spoke to the General Chapter of the growing movement of "men and women ready and willing to find ways of adding to and reinforcing Norbertine communities with their gifts. Here we are called to hope." Her pioneering spirit has inspired us to move forward in faith.

(continued on page 4)

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that our work may
continue...**

Associates *(from page 3)*

As a result of discussions begun in Mondaye and continued at the General Chapter, Abbot General Thomas Handgrättinger announced, in a letter dated November 11, 2006, the formation of the new Lay Associates Commission (LAC). This new Order commission will be chaired by Abbot Rossi of Daylesford and includes four other members from Europe and the United States. The new commission will hold its first organizational meeting at the Abbey of Postel in Belgium on February 3-4, 2007.

The tasks of this new commission are to accompany the growth and development of the Norbertine Associates, to participate in the planning of national and international meetings, and to prepare an Associate handbook and statutes for Associate members. Recently, Abbot Rossi has asked each house in the United States to form a coordinating committee to help plan a national meeting for Associates. That work will begin before the summer.

There is great excitement growing around the prospects for connecting at a deeper level across time and space with other baptized Christians following Christ in the Norbertine spirit. These are women and men who have been attracted to the charisms of the Norbertine community as a way to live out their baptismal call in a more deeply committed way.

New Norbertine Vocation Video

At the beginning of 2007 a new vocation video for the Norbertines of New Mexico was finished by our friend Jay Thomas. Jay has been filming special events in our community for over ten years. Recently he interviewed several community members and took shots of our members in ministerial settings. The eight minute video also includes comments by inquirers who have visited our community. It can soon be viewed on our website:
www.norbertinecommunity.org.

Comings and Goings...

The Norbertine parishes of Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary and St. Anne cancelled all masses on Holy Family Sunday because of a snow storm.... There just were no plows to handle the snow that had fallen.... Our Norbertine brother, Fr. Jim Huth, who is doing post doctoral work in Canada, and his aunt, Sr. Marge Conroy, a Sinsinawa Dominican, were our guests over Christmas... Brother Bob Campbell is the chair of the Archdiocesan Religious Vocation Committee which is presently working on TV spots to highlight the vocation to religious life.... Graham Golden will become an affiliate and Lisa Ford an Oblate novice at Vespers at our February Community Day.... At the beginning of February, Fr. Angelo Feldkamp was reassigned from St. Norbert Abbey to the community of Santa Maria de la Vid.