“I realize that when they are sung, these sacred words stir my mind to greater religious fervor and kindle in me a more ardent form of piety than they would if they were not sung ...”
(St. Augustine, “Confessions”).

I was introduced to singing at an early age by my father. He would frequently sing songs from the 20s and 30s, popular when he was growing up: “How Much is that Doggie in the Window” and “Jeanie with the Light Brown Hair.” I enjoyed singing and spent many years in chorus. It was far better that I sang with a group than going solo.

When I was seven I was eager to learn to play an instrument, specifically the piano. I convinced my folks to finance the 50-cent fee for an hour of instruction. I met with the instructor one Saturday morning and paid her the 50 cents. She next asked to see my hands. She pursed her lips, shook her head, returned my quarters and said she could not teach me anything—my hands were too large, “given to me by God to work on the railroad.” Singing it would have to be!

I have now been blessed for 46 years to have the opportunity to chant (that is, sing) the Divine Office.

While most of us are not soloists, the desire and effort to praise God in song is truly evident. Some days are better than others, but the singing focuses our thoughts and helps put us in a sacred place. I find the psalms and the antiphons are more easily memorized and allow a whole different level of reflection. And it is significant that we continue a practice that has such a long and rich tradition.

Augustine enthusiastically promoted singing praises to God. He taught that it was important to sing not only with one’s mouth but also with one’s heart and deeds. He described the praise in singing as a foretaste of the abundant joy of our prospective life in the “new heaven and new earth.” Singing of songs is inseparably connected to people who know that they received new life in Jesus Christ. Augustine continues: “So now, my brethren, let us sing, not to delight our leisure, but to ease our toil. In the way that travelers are in the habit of singing, sing, but keep on walking ... but go onward in goodness, for there are, according to the Apostle, some people who go ever onward from bad to worse. If you are going onward, you are walking; but always go onward in goodness, onward in the right faith, onward in good habits and behavior. Sing, and walk onwards.”
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God’s Own Glue: Shared Prayer, Meals, Recreation, and Work

By Fr. John Bostwick, O. Praem. Translated by Sr. Guadalupe Muñoz

“The first purpose for which you have come together is to live in unity in the house and to be of one mind and one heart on the way to God” (“Rule of St. Augustine,” ch. 2).

The family that prays together stays together. In the mid-twentieth century, this principle appeared everywhere as a lifestyle basic for a healthy family. Norbertines hold dear a set of core values that help us embody our goal of living one in mind and heart on the way to God. These lifestyle principles have been described as the non-negotiables of Norbertine life—or ideals, for sure, since we often fall short of living them perfectly.

They begin with common prayer. For us that means the daily Mass and Liturgy of the Hours and embraces other ways of sharing prayer less formally. Then, and of equal importance, we share common meals and recreation. These are opportunities to share with one another as persons. As a community of adults, shared decision-making helps bind us together. Then, finally, as circumstances permit, we share work, both the commitments to formal ministry and the daily tasks of living together.

When I think about it, it strikes me that these core lifestyle values apply to any healthy family. Norbertines are, after all, people trying to live a faith-based life together. People have asked what is the glue that brings Norbertines together? And while the first response is likely to be our faith and our vows, it seems to me that the nuts and bolts are these core lifestyle values, values common to so many strong families.

“Now these remained faithful to the teaching of the apostles, to the brotherhood, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers” (Acts 2:42).
El “Pegamento” Propio de Dios:
El Compartir de Oración, Comidas, Recreo y Trabajo

Por Padre John Bostwick, O. Praem. Traducido por Sr. Guadalupe Muñoz

“El primer propósito por lo cual se han reunido ustedes es para vivir unidos en casa y ser de una mente y un corazón en el camino hacia Dios” (“Regla de San Agustín,” cap. 2).

La familia que ora juntos perseveran juntos. A mediados del siglo 20, este principio aparecía por todos lados como estilo de vida básico para una familia saludable. Los Norbertinos mantenemos y apreciamos un conjunto de valores básicos que nos ayudan a encarnar nuestra meta de vivir unidos de corazón y mente en el camino hacia Dios. Estos principios de estilo de vida han sido descritos como los no-negociables de la vida Norbertina—o sean los ideales, seguramente, puesto que frecuentemente fallamos en vivirlos perfectamente.

Estos comienzan con la oración comunitaria. Para nosotros esto significa la Misa y la Liturgia de las Horas cada día y también abarca otras maneras de compartir la oración con menos formalidad. Luego, y de importancia igual, compartimos las comidas comunitarias y la recreación. Estas son oportunidades para compartir entre nosotros como personas. Como una comunidad de adultos, el compartir de la toma de decisiones nos ayuda a ligarnos. Y finalmente, cuando las circunstancias nos lo permitan, compartimos el trabajo, tanto los compromisos en el ministerio formal como también las tareas diarias de nuestro convivir.

Cuando pienso en esto, me impresiona que estos valores básicos sobre estilo de vida se aplican a cualquier familia saludable. Los Norbertinos somos, al final de cuentas, personas tratando de vivir juntos una vida basada en la fe. Algunas personas nos han preguntado: ¿qué o cual, es el pegamento que nos reúne a los Norbertinos? Y aunque nuestra primera respuesta suele ser nuestra fe y nuestros votos, me parece a mí que los “pernos y tuercas” (que nos unen) son estos valores básicos del estilo de vida, valores comunes en tantas familias fuertes.

“Estos permanecieron fieles a las enseñanzas de los apóstoles, en la hermandad, el compartir del pan y las oraciones” (Hechos 2:42).
Norbertines across the globe have a distinctively rich culture of sacred music and song that traces its roots back to their founder, St. Norbert of Xanten, in 1120. As a younger man, Norbert served as a canon, or a priest who sang the Divine Office, also known as the Liturgy of the Hours, in great cathedrals, within present-day Germany. His early formation was imbued with beautiful sacred music, and many historians link the Norbertines’ long tradition of the chorale office to these strong early musical influences.

“We sing scripture,” explained Dr. Michael Frisch, O. Praem., music director at St. Norbert Abbey and a Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA) in organ performance and church music from the University of Michigan.

“It’s spelled out in our constitution that we pray the chorale office by singing the canticles and psalms. This is different from reciting the office, and it powerfully impacts who we are as a community.”

The Norbertine tradition of singing scripture harkens back nearly 900 years. In fact, the formal title of members of the Norbertine order is Canons Regular of Prémontré (France) which literally means singers of the Divine Office who follow the regulations set forth by St. Augustine. In particular, praying the Divine Office has its roots in the Old Testament. The tradition of reciting prayers at certain times of the day or night is an extension of a Jewish custom carried forward by the Apostles.
Write for the People: Twentieth Century Norbertine Composers Build Repertoire, Communities

The Order of Canons Regular of Prémontré has throughout the years served as a creative space for composers whose work went on to strongly influence Roman Catholic liturgical music and the local civic community. Three such men of St. Norbert Abbey in De Pere are revered for their artistic leadership, community spirit, and instruction:

Frs. Vanden Elsen and Dobbelsteen were both priest-musicians who were ordained and musically trained at Berne Abbey in Holland before immigrating to America as missionary recruits to Wisconsin.

Fr. Vanden Elsen came in 1900. Here, he joined the two-year-old Norbertine community and the first academic year of St. Norbert College in De Pere. Musically speaking, he was generally shocked by the quality of liturgical music in America's Belgian, Dutch, and German immigrant communities, described at the time as, “too operatic, too florid, and too sentimental.” In a letter back to Holland shortly after his arrival, Fr. Vanden Elsen reported that the music at Mass was often sung to the melody of American folk tunes, including “Home Sweet Home.” He includes scathing critiques of self-taught church organists, strange Latin pronunciation, and untrained choir conductors.

Fr. Vanden Elsen set to work and composed his first piece on the new continent around 1902. He then wrote two very well-received Masses for which he was paid the handsome sum of $75 by the publishing house. A collection of Mass Propers, or liturgical texts that vary from day to day according to the liturgical calendar, published in 1922, was ingeniously composed to flex with the differing levels of experience in small Wisconsin Catholic parishes of the time. Similarly, his 1939 “Mass in Honor of St. Helena” allows for one to four mixed voices with organ accompaniment.


2. (Frisch, 26.)
It was a “very usable Mass during northeastern Wisconsin winters, when attendance of the church choir could vary from some members to one member.”

Fr. Dobbelsteen, eight years the junior of Fr. Vanden Elsen, arrived in the U.S. in 1912. He was a distinctly more public person than the more humble and peaceful Fr. Vanden Elsen. Described as “an ambitious, industrious, and gregarious fellow,” he was appointed dean of music at St. Norbert College, founded the De Pere Choral Society, and readily crafted several choral pieces with a popular slant, all in English, and all for piano accompaniment. By 1915 the choral society was 150 strong, accompanied by a full orchestra, and renamed the De Pere-Green Bay Choral Society. Its performance that year was one of the grandest events ever to be held in the community. His first Mass published in the U.S. in 1919 was descriptively titled “Short and Easy Mass in C in Honor of the Holy Childhood.” A set of seasonal Christmas and Easter organ music, written for the harmonium—a smaller, simpler pump organ that could be found in small parishes—was composed in the 1940s.

Fr. Sromovsky is widely recognized as the first influential American-born Norbertine composer of original hymns from St. Norbert Abbey in De Pere. He was born in Manistique, Michigan, in 1905, and attended St. Norbert High School in De Pere before joining the order in 1922. After graduating from St. Norbert College, he accepted a teaching post there and was ordained a Norbertine priest in 1927. As both a skilled musicologist and mathematician, Fr. Sromovsky continued his studies in Rome and then at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, where he was granted the university’s first Ph.D. in musicology in 1936 coupled with a doctorate in mathematics. Fr. Sromovsky is remembered by his students and fellow Norbertines as a master of 16th century counterpoint, very broadly defined as a complex musical form where the relationship between voices, or parts, are interdependent harmonically (polyphony), yet independent in rhythm and contour. As the cantor at the abbey and eventual sub-prior, Fr. Sromovsky was a fastidious instructor of chant.

The creative tension that fuels the work of musicians at St. Norbert Abbey today is rooted in the Norbertine desire to worship God splendidly, accessibly, and hospitably. These men embraced the Norbertines’ pledge to call all people to worship God through beautiful and serious praise. Early settlers were offered meaningful liturgical music that fit the simpler environs in which they worshiped. City-dwellers were introduced to the first large-scale civic choir in the region through Fr. Dobblesteen’s passion for people and performance. Fr. Sromovsky dedicated himself to the intricate technicalities of High Church music at a time when the Norbertines of St. Norbert Abbey were able to build their present-day abbey, complete with a sky-high vaulted worship space and 3,000-pipe Casavant organ, most recently complemented by the highly trained voices of the Abbey Singers. All are welcome to come to pray—splendidly and seriously. “After all,” Dr. Frisch said, calling to mind the words of St. Augustine, “He who sings well, prays twice!”

Ordinary or Extraordinary?
The parts of the Mass that are the same every Sunday comprise the Mass Ordinary. The music that is composed when a new Mass is written accompanies these portions. Early Masses written by Fr. Dobbelsteen, Fr. Vanden Elsen, and Fr. Sromovsky were written for the Latin Mass. After Vatican II and the switch to the use of vernacular languages, most of these Latin Masses fell out of use. Such compositions may be used today in Extraordinary Rites, or special Latin Masses.
All are invited to celebrate Mass at St. Norbert Abbey on Sundays at 10 a.m. During the school year, the Abbey Singers, directed by Dr. Michael Frisch, O. Praem., St. Norbert Abbey Music Director, enrich the worship with their choral music.

The Abbey Singers of St. Norbert College, established in 2010, is an audition-only paid choir comprised of vocal music majors from the St. Norbert College Chamber Singers. “We have the cream of the crop,” said Dr. Frisch. In partnership with Dr. Sarah Parks, director of music at the college, Dr. Frisch conceived of the choir after contemplating the need for more choral music at both the abbey and in service to the large convocation and graduation Masses at the college. Members rehearse once a week under the direction of Dr. Frisch, practice and work together on their own, and sing at Sunday Mass during the academic year. Dr. Frisch is assisted by the abbey organist, Devin Atteln, a 2014 graduate of St. Norbert College.

With the advent of the Abbey Singers, attendance at Sunday Mass at the abbey has noticeably increased. “After our first graduation Mass, we received rave reviews. Over time, the choir grew from eight to 12 members with the full support of Abbot Gary Neville, O. Praem.,” Dr. Frisch said. “We are helping form the next generation of liturgists, music directors, and professional vocalists, and that’s very rewarding.”

Witnesses to the Spirit

The folk song revival of the 1960s led to the formation of The Witnesses, a group of Norbertines who sang for those who did not have regular programs of entertainment; namely, people in hospitals, schools, and nursing homes. In the beginning, the men built their own speakers and borrowed microphones from the abbey’s radio Mass. During their four-year existence (1964-1968), The Witnesses played 170 times in the local community. An archived history of the group reports, “Basically, we wanted to show others that men could work together, sharing each other’s talents and complementing each other. We also wanted to project the image of the Norbertine frat(er) as ‘a man of his time.’ ”
Fr. Bartholomew Agar, O. Praem., 83, served as the abbey organist at St. Norbert Abbey in De Pere, with few interruptions, from 1950 until his retirement in 2001. He is a font of wisdom and memories when it comes to the selection, installation, and history of the abbey’s 3,000-pipe Casavant organ from Saint-Hyacinthe, Quebec. I recently interviewed him to collect his memories and insights.

How did you become a musician and a priest?
I was raised by my grandparents in South Philadelphia, and my grandpa was an English immigrant who played the piano by ear. At age 10 I lost him, and I tell you, I can still feel that loss. Not long after, it was the Great Depression and one of the sisters teaching at my parish, St. Monica School, came along offering to teach piano lessons. I said, ‘Yes! My grandpa played piano,’ and that was the start of it all.

I went to the Norbertine high school in Philadelphia and joined the band. I loved it. The guys in white habits just floored me. I knew I wanted to be a priest and teacher, so you could say I kind of walked into a perfect situation. I could do all the things I loved if I became a Norbertine priest.

What is your earliest memory of playing the organ?
In South Philly, we all went to confession every Saturday. Many times, in the church above, you would hear the organ playing for weddings. Then one day I heard an organ lesson going on instead. I climbed up to the choir loft to see what was going on and had a chance to take my first organ lesson from the parish organist, David Spratt, a no-nonsense Englishman, by the way. I was good at getting two hands and feet to move at the same time. The hardest part was getting the feel of it. As a pianist, it’s an entirely different touch.

Tell us about your formation and education.
I graduated from Southeast Catholic High School in Philadelphia and earned my B.A. from St. Norbert College in 1955. Back then, St. Norbert Abbey was on the SNC campus, and there was an old WWII pump organ in the chapel and a big out-of-tune pipe organ at Old St. Joe’s. Money was very tight, so I worked with Fr. Sromovsky for hours and hours trying to tune the...
old Estey pipe organ. After I was ordained a priest in 1958, I played organ for the abbey choir for a year. Then I was sent to teach high school for 13 years at my alma mater, St. John Neumann High School in Philadelphia. Fr. Sromovsky planned to retire from SNC in 1972, and I was invited back to teach music history and take on a number of organ students. I earned my M.A. from Columbia University Teachers’ College and retired from teaching in 1985 as professor emeritus; however, I was the abbey organist until 2001, which means I played the organ here for nearly 40 years.

Do you remember when the grand organ was purchased for the present-day St. Norbert Abbey?
That was right around the time when the new abbey was being built. I was sent to UW-Madison summer school as a solemn professed in 1957 to study music and organ. My superiors said, ‘Ask your teachers what kind of organ we should get for the abbey.’ My professor was John Wright Harvey, and he offered several of us students the chance to tour south central Wisconsin, looking at organ installations. When we got to Beloit College, he said, ‘This is it. This is the organ you need.’ He said it was perfect for accompanying liturgy in church, for concerts, and for teaching. We actually went back to the classroom in Old Music Hall on the Madison campus and he designed the instrument right there on the chalkboard. I remember that day, because it was so hot and steamy in Madison and we were all sitting there in our hot black suits.

I took our ideas back to Fr. Sromovsky and he said, ‘There’s one problem. It’s a Casavant. The cost is too high. Can they design a smaller version?’ So we ended up proposing a big and small version. Abbot Killeen was able to find a sizeable donation and we got to purchase the big one. It cost $48,000 in 1957.

What do you remember about the arrival of the organ from Quebec?
I know Fr. Sromovsky went up to Quebec to play the erected organ in the factory. Then the builders took the entire instrument apart and numbered it, and shipped it by rail to the depot in De Pere. The fraters, young men in formation, went to the depot and loaded the wooden crates on a semi-truck to get them to the abbey. I can still see those crates stacked on the loading dock and along the long corridors, piled from floor to ceiling. Otto Eberly, an organ builder from Milwaukee, was hired to come up and supervise its assembly. The organ didn’t fit into the chamber. No one told the builder that the chamber floor sat two feet lower than the library floor. We had to rearrange the organ and miter the pipes to put them off at angles. It was dedicated in 1959.

How has the organ changed over time?
We learned that the organ screen material was supposed to match the color of the abbot’s throne drapery so the place where the pipes sounded was draped in a heavy green brocade fabric at the dedication. Do you know it was kept that way for 25 years? Not until 1983, when the abbey was being cleaned from top to bottom, did we replace it with transparent speaker fabric. The organ just sparkled, and the sound was glorious.
In the 1980s, the organ was starting to show its age. It needed updates and expensive maintenance. By that time, Abbot Killeen had retired at St. Norbert Abbey. On occasion he liked to visit the Alexian Brothers at Gresham, Wisconsin. There he struck up a strong friendship with an Episcopalian priest named Canon John O. Bruce. Canon John just loved the magnificent sounds of our organ. When I was playing I improvised a lot and he loved it when I did goofy things. When Canon John died, he left us $300,000 in his will to take care of the organ and start a concert series.

We used this money in 1997 to upgrade the organ console from stop knobs to a digital console. The reservoirs were all leaking air so we had all the leather bellows replaced. Wires had to be installed to connect the electronic console to all 3,000 pipes. There’s an eight-inch diameter conduit that encloses all those wires. After nine months and $48,000, which is what the organ originally cost, it was wonderful to have our organ back.

Remember, the church is not air conditioned, which has caused the original ivory keyboards to warp. But I always said, ‘We have to keep them. Look at all the people who played these keys, who’ve touched them.’ So we have. The original keys are still here.

What makes St. Norbert Abbey and the Casavant organ sound so uniquely beautiful and powerful?

Who has played at St. Norbert Abbey?

From the very beginning Casavant had its master voicer voice each pipe to make it sound perfectly balanced with the other pipes and the acoustics of the church. Stanton Peters from Milwaukee has been our organ caretaker for 40 years. He knows the instrument inside and out. He knows its soul. We have no echoes in the church, only reverb. One chord on a humid day can last for five seconds.

We invested Canon John’s gift and used a portion of it to establish the Canon John O. Bruce Memorial Organ Concert Series in 1997. We still hold three recitals a year, all free of charge. Organists from the Curtis Institute of Music, the Yale Institute of Sacred Music, and Juilliard have all played here. The titular organists from Notre Dame in Paris, and organists from St. Paul’s Cathedral in London, Westminster Abbey and Cathedral, Kings College, and Oxford have played here. I pride myself on celebrating the Eucharist as a priest, first and foremost. But the organ—it’s just in my bones. I love myself a good liturgy!
See It Here Live!

Join us on September 24, as we view, live, Pope Francis’ address to Congress.
The event begins at 7:45 a.m. with a continental breakfast, followed by the 8:20 a.m. congressional address. A local panel will react to the Pope’s message and participants will be invited to join a facilitated discussion. Registration is required by Sept. 21, with a donation kindly accepted. Please call (920) 337-4315 or register online at www.norbertines.com/programs.html

Sound the Bell of Holy Freedom

New Papal Hymn Rings True to Philadelphia, Faith

Fr. Andrew Ciferni, O. Praem., tapped his instincts as a Philadelphia native, an ordained priest, and a practiced liturgist to pen the original hymn that was chosen for Pope Francis’ celebration of the Mass during the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia, September 2015. Fr. Ciferni’s text, melded with Gouin’s music, was the judges’ first choice. “It was thrilling and unexpected,” Fr. Ciferni said. “People think I’m a hymn writer, but I’m not. Give me a topic and a meter, and I can create something. I’ve been singing hymns for 56 years, and my goal is to internalize all this experience and create something new without simply reproducing it—to take it forward.”

Fr. Ciferni attended Catholic schools in Philadelphia and took his priestly formation at the Norbertine abbeys in Daylesford, Pennsylvania, and De Pere, Wisconsin, so it was especially meaningful to write for Pope Francis’ visit to his hometown. “Sound the Bell of Holy Freedom” expresses the hope that all people will freely choose God’s love. The hymn has six stanzas: a call to worship; genealogy of the holy family; the infancy of Jesus; the holy family of Nazareth; Mary’s sorrow as a mother amidst her child’s suffering; and a call to worship and sending forth to spread God’s Word.

Sound the bell of holy freedom, call all nations of the earth.
Sons and daughters of one Father, sent to spread God’s saving Word.
Come, and gather, as one family at the table of the Lord.
David’s branch from root of Jesse, Mary that vine’s flourish rose.
She brought forth for us the Savior as the angel did propose;
Overshadowed by the Spirit, by her “yes” new life arise.
Blessed Joseph, spouse of Mary, teacher of your God and Lord.
You did shelter and provide for wondrous child by kings adored.
Open to God’s Word in dreaming saved your child from Herod’s sword.
Jesus, youth in lowly Nazareth, faithful son, and loving child.
Guest and host at Cana’s wedding, finest wine you did provide.
You, our rock, and you our shelter, keep us ever by your side.
At the cross, a grieving mother, on the cross, her only son.
With all mothers and their children, Blessed Mary, you are one.
In our joys, and in our sorrows may we as you have done.
Sound the bell of holy freedom, call all families of the world.
To be fed by love incarnate, to proclaim God’s holy Word.
Through the love of Christ our brother, in the Spirit make us one.

Text: Andrew D. Ciferni, O. Praem., b. 1942
Tune: PHILADELPHIA, 8 7 8 7 8 7: Normand Gouin, b. 1970
© World Meeting of Families – Philadelphia 2015
These are exciting times at the Norbertine Center for Spirituality as we continue to grow and evolve. With nearly 10,000 visits during the past year and an additional 700 people reached through on-the-road programs and retreats, women and men of all ages are realizing that our center is a tremendous spiritual resource.

The most recent addition to our staff adds another layer of expertise and energy. Tony Pichler, former director of lay ministry formation for the Diocese of Green Bay, became co-director of the Norbertine Center for Spirituality on July 1, after serving on the center’s advisory board for the past three years. He is a graduate of St. John’s University, Collegeville, Minnesota, and received a Master of Theological Studies degree from St. Norbert College. Tony is vitally involved with St. John the Evangelist Homeless Shelter and is co-founder of StreetLights Outreach, a street ministry in Green Bay. Please join us in welcoming Tony.
Mark Your Calendar

Our fall season is packed with wonderful programs and retreats including:

**The Conrad J. Kratz, O. Praem. Abbey Lecture Series**

- **Sr. Nancy Schreck, OSF**, an internationally-renowned leader, educator, and retreat facilitator. Wisdom for the Journey is being held on October 15.
- **Edwina Gateley**, noted author, humanitarian, and international retreat facilitator, is offering a general presentation, *I Hear God Laughing: One Woman’s Journey of Faith*, at St. Norbert College on October 22, and **Soul Sisters: A Retreat for Women** held at the Norbertine Center for Spirituality on October 23 and 24. She is a most courageous woman with a prophetic voice who is changing the world. Retreat space is limited so be sure to register early.

For additional information or to receive a program guide, visit [www.norbertines.org](http://www.norbertines.org) or call the center at (920) 337-4315.

An Evening Away for Mothers with Young Children

This successful event included healthy food, a bit of wine, presentations about nutrition with registered dietitian **Carmen Honnef**, and the importance of self care with **Judy Turba**. As one mom shared, “It was so nice being affirmed with an opportunity to relax, learn, and spend time with other moms—a perfect night away!” It was our first attempt at supporting this often overworked and underappreciated group and we will continue to do so. Watch for details!

Kentucky Wonders: Merton, Bourbon, and Bluegrass

Celebrating the 100th anniversary of the birth of theologian Thomas Merton, the evening began with a toast and presentation by **Fr. Tim Shilcox, O. Praem.**, followed by information about Kentucky bourbon offered by **Dr. Paul Wadell**, St. Norbert College religious studies professor and former whiskey tour guide. It concluded with knee-slapping, hand-clapping Kentucky bluegrass music performed by **Bentgrass Combo**.

Labyrinth Presentation and Walk

On a lovely summer evening, 50 people joined **Kathie Tilot** as she offered information about an ancient meditative prayer form. Participants then walked the winding labyrinth adjacent to the Norbertine Center for Spirituality, accompanied by mesmerizing flute music performed by **Keith McGillivray**. Given the wonderful response to the event, future labyrinth walks are being planned.

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A Priest for the People

On June 6, 2015, **Fr. Matthew Dougherty, O. Praem.**, was ordained to the priesthood. Through ritual actions that contribute uniquely to the Rite of Ordination, he was given insight into his new identity. Of the major elements in this rite, first to occur was the Rite of Election, connecting the soon-to-be ordained with the faithful by asking their assent of his worthiness to fulfill priestly office. Bishop Robert Morneau (Auxiliary Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese of Green Bay) asked Abbot Gary Neville, O. Praem. (representing the Norbertine community of St. Norbert Abbey and the entire People of God), “Do you know him to be worthy?”

“You can’t help but feel humbled and a little bit nervous by that question, honestly,” shared Fr. Dougherty, reflecting on his ordination day. “Humbling is the best word. Because how can anyone be worthy—to perform the Sacraments, to follow Christ in that way? There’s a fear: am I really up for it? In a way, I’m not worthy. I don’t think anyone is worthy of such a gift.”

Following dialogue between Bishop Morneau and Abbot Neville affirming his worthiness, Fr. Dougherty received a lengthy round of approving applause—recognition of Christ working in him and an implicit invitation to enter into the lives of everyone.

“Amid feelings of unworthiness, to feel affirmation for my vocation through the applause was amazing,” said Fr. Dougherty.
“Perhaps one of the most demanding pieces of priestly formation is coming to terms with one’s self: ‘Who am I to be a priest?’ Priesthood is an awesome gift and an awesome responsibility. These people are lifting you up to be their servant. By showing their assent, you are for them ... to share in their most intimate moments, the ups and downs. Today, as a priest, I remain grateful. Never have I felt closer to God. Never have I experienced a stronger sense of identity or purpose. I am not a priest for myself, but a priest for Christ, his Church, and the world—I am a priest for the people.”
Community Celebrates 340 Years of Norbertine Priesthood

On June 5, 2015, the eve of the Feast of St. Norbert, Abbot Gary Neville, O. Praem., presided at Solemn Vespers in the abbey church. This sacred celebration also honored the 50th and 60th priesthood ordination anniversaries of six Norbertines. Their profiles can be found online at www.norbertines.org.

In August 2015, as the Norbertine community of St. Norbert Abbey celebrated its annual observance of the Feast of St. Augustine, three men took their next steps in honoring their commitments to the order.

Feast of St. Augustine Celebrated at St. Norbert Abbey

In a Norbertine's canonical life, professing the traditional vows of poverty, celibacy, and obedience evidences complete dedication to God and to his confreres for a period of three years. Frater Jordan Neeck, O. Praem., professed these simple vows on August 28.

That same day, Frater Jacob Sircy, O. Praem., and Frater Bradley Vanden Branden, O. Praem., both professed solemn vows, forging a mutual lifelong commitment to the canonical life between themselves and the entire professed community. Abbot Gary Neville, O. Praem., presided over the solemn rites.

The following day, Frater Vanden Branden was also ordained to the diaconate by Bishop Robert Morneau, Auxiliary Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese of Green Bay.

In a Norbertine's canonical life, professing the traditional vows of poverty, celibacy, and obedience evidences complete dedication to God and to his confreres for a period of three years. Frater Jordan Neeck, O. Praem., professed these simple vows on August 28.

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In August 2015, as the Norbertine community of St. Norbert Abbey celebrated its annual observance of the Feast of St. Augustine, three men took their next steps in honoring their commitments to the order.

Feast of St. Augustine Celebrated at St. Norbert Abbey

In a Norbertine's canonical life, professing the traditional vows of poverty, celibacy, and obedience evidences complete dedication to God and to his confreres for a period of three years. Frater Jordan Neeck, O. Praem., professed these simple vows on August 28.

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Community Celebrates 340 Years of Norbertine Priesthood

On June 5, 2015, the eve of the Feast of St. Norbert, Abbot Gary Neville, O. Praem., presided at Solemn Vespers in the abbey church. This sacred celebration also honored the 50th and 60th priesthood ordination anniversaries of six Norbertines. Their profiles can be found online at www.norbertines.org.
Norbertines Minister Within Green Bay Diocese

FR. ANDREW CIFERNI, O. PRAEM., (Daylesford Abbey), is now priest celebrant at St. Norbert College Parish at Old St. Joseph Church, retaining his current ministry as the director of the Center for Norbertine Studies on campus.

FR. SALVATORE CUCIA, O. PRAEM., joins Fr. Rowland De Peaux, O. Praem., as Norbertine liaison to the Office of Alumni and Parent Relations at St. Norbert College, retaining his current ministry as St. Norbert Abbey house superior/sub-prior and concluding his ministry as parochial vicar of St. Norbert College Parish at Old St. Joseph Church.

BR. STEVEN HERRO, O. PRAEM., is now pastoral associate of the St. Clare Parish Catholic Community in Askeaton, Greenleaf, and Wrightstown, Wisconsin.

FR. JOHN (JACK) MACCARTHY, O. PRAEM., is now parochial vicar of St. Willebrord Parish in Green Bay. In addition to this appointment, he is a new member of the faculty at the Medical College of Wisconsin on the St. Norbert College campus.

FR. JAMES NEILSON, O. PRAEM., is now administrator of St. Norbert College Parish at Old St. Joseph Church, retaining his current ministry as assistant professor of art at the college.

FR. JOHN TOURANGEAU, O. PRAEM., is continuing to pursue doctoral studies, concluding his ministry as pastor of St. Norbert College Parish at Old St. Joseph Church.

FR. BINU VARGHESE, O. PRAEM., (Jamtara Abbey, India), is now priest celebrant at the Wisconsin parishes of St. Nicholas (Freedom) and St. Edward (Mackville), having moved to De Pere from the Norbertine Priory of St. Moses the Black in Jackson, Mississippi.

Letters to the Editor

Reflections from a very special retreat

Following the success of a men’s retreat for guests of St. John the Evangelist Homeless Shelter, a retreat for women from the shelter was offered in April 2015. They spent two days and one night on retreat at the Norbertine Center for Spirituality followed by a day of reflection in May. Guided by five volunteers, these women spent time learning about themselves, one another, and God, with sessions punctuated by laughter, tears, and hope. Yet above all, gratitude was expressed for a safe environment, showers, healthy food, and simply being in a place in which they felt respected. Virginia Sue, one of the participants, graciously shared her thoughts regarding the experience. We, who have homes, have much more in common with those who experience homelessness than we tend to realize.

Virginia Sue wrote:

I did not know what to expect at the Women’s Retreat at the Norbertine Center for Spirituality. As we drove into the entrance of the abbey, I was in awe of the peaceful beauty of the grounds and the friendly greeting I received upon entering the building. I felt at ease, at peace, and welcome.

The room I was to occupy for the night looked out over one of the gardens. Looking out the window, the view was lovely although the trees and flower beds still reflected the winter cold. I was amazed and delighted to see the chapel and its stained glass windows.

Every activity helped me to focus on myself and my relationships. Receiving positive affirmations from the other women boosted my self-esteem tremendously. Having a time of reflection, drawing pictures, and the other activities directed my thoughts on where I was in life. I was going through a rough storm that was overwhelming, but I realized I had the strength to survive and learn.

I was sad to leave the next day, but will remember the time I spent with some wonderful people, the excellent food prepared for us, and my newfound strength. However, the promise of a follow-up retreat kept the spark alive for my next visit in May.

When I returned in May, I took the opportunity to walk the prayer labyrinth. I realized how my life’s path matched each twist and curve.

This experience has left me with more options for myself and my personal relationships. I can look at myself and smile at the beautiful person I am. One day, I will bring my daughter for our own little retreat. Thank you.

Since the retreat, Virginia Sue has become employed full-time and is living independently in an apartment with her daughter.

Please submit letters to:
Judy Turba
St. Norbert Abbey
1016 N. Broadway
De Pere, WI 54115
e-mail: judy.turba@norbertines.org
phone: (920) 337-4312

To learn more about the NVC, a full-time service opportunity and outreach program of the Norbertine community, contact Ellen Mommaerts, Director, at (920) 403-2944, or via e-mail at ellen.mommaerts@norbertines.org.
2015 Fall/Winter Calendar for The Norbertine Center for Spirituality

**SEPTEMBER**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8, 22</td>
<td>Providence, Suffering, and Freedom (Dr. Howard Ebert)</td>
<td>6:30-8 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Finding Balance: The Practice of Mindfulness for Resilience and Well-Being (Pr. Lee Goodwin)</td>
<td>10-11 a.m. OR 6:30-7:30 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>From the Maas River to the Fox River: Norbertine Beginnings in Northeast Wisconsin (Fr. Andrew Ciferni)</td>
<td>6:30-8 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Understanding the Language of Dreams (Rev. Tricia Matthew)</td>
<td>6:30-8 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23, 30</td>
<td>Finding Balance: A Six-Week Course in Mindfulness Meditation Practice (Pr. Lee Goodwin)</td>
<td>9:30-11:30 a.m. OR 6:30-8:30 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Finding Peace of Mind and Heart Amid Change and Tragedy (Fr. Tim Shillcox)</td>
<td>6:30-8 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>The Old Testament: Book of Leviticus (Dr. Tom Bolin)</td>
<td>6:30-8 p.m.</td>
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**OCTOBER**

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<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Blessing of the Animals (Fr. John Kastenholz)</td>
<td>9:30 a.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5, 12</td>
<td>Shakespeare and Catholicism: The Tempest (Fr. David Komatz)</td>
<td>6:30-8:30 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Providence, Suffering, and Freedom (Dr. Howard Ebert)</td>
<td>6:30-8 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Coffee and Conversation with Fr. Bartholomew Agar</td>
<td>10-11 a.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7, 14, 21, 28</td>
<td>Finding Balance: A Six-Week Course in Mindfulness Meditation Practice (Pr. Lee Goodwin)</td>
<td>9:30-11:30 a.m. OR 6:30-8:30 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Conrad J. Kratz, O. Praem. Abbey Lecture: Wisdom for the Journey (Sr. Nancy Shreck)</td>
<td>6:30-8 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Canon John O. Bruce Memorial Organ Concert (Peter Richard Conte, organ; Andrew Ennis, flugelhorn), Abbey Church, 2 p.m.</td>
<td>2 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Taizé Prayer, Abbey Church, 7 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>I Hear God Laughing: One Woman's Journey of Faith (Edwina Gateley), St. Norbert College, 7-8:15 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>23-24</td>
<td>Soul Sisters: A Retreat for Women (Edwina Gateley), Friday, 4:30 p.m.-Saturday, 3:30 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>To Heaven and Back: The Journey of a Roman Catholic Priest (Fr. John Tourangeau)</td>
<td>6:30-8 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Project Holiness: Real Wisdom from Real Married Couples (Dr. Bridget Burke Ravizza, Julie Donovan Massey), 6:30-8 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Deepening the Spiritual Life: The Journey Continues (Pr. Lee Goodwin, Sr. Judy Miller)</td>
<td>8 a.m.-1 p.m.</td>
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**NOVEMBER**

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<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Lessons from Veterans and their Families: Calming the Tremors of Trauma (George Kamps)</td>
<td>6:30-8 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Coffee and Conversation with Fr. Brendan McKeough</td>
<td>10-11 a.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>St. Teresa of Avila: Transformed by God's Love (Sr. Diane Baumann)</td>
<td>6:30-8 p.m.</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Taizé Prayer, Abbey Church, 7 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>A Vision for Ending Homelessness in Brown County (Dr. Karina O'Malley)</td>
<td>6:30-8 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Capitalism: A Force for Good (Frater Jordan Neeck)</td>
<td>6:30-7:30 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>A Morning for Caregivers (Frater Michael Brennan)</td>
<td>9 a.m.-Noon</td>
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**DECEMBER**

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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Advent Series: Advent and the Landscape of Justice and Joy (Fr. James Neilson)</td>
<td>9:15-10:15 a.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Advent Series: An Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy (Fr. Tim Shillcox)</td>
<td>9:15-10:15 a.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Taizé Prayer, Abbey Church, 7 p.m.</td>
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**JANUARY**

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<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Schola d'Arezzo Concert (Gregorian chant of the Christmas season), Abbey Church, 2:30 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Morning of Spiritual Renewal for Women</td>
<td>8 a.m.-1 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Taizé Prayer, Abbey Church, 7 p.m.</td>
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For a complete list of programs and retreats, please visit [www.norbertines.org/programs.html](http://www.norbertines.org/programs.html) or call (920) 337-4315 to receive our latest program guide.