

IHS

# FIRST FRUITS

*“Those who have the FirstFruits of the Spirit are groaning in the expectation of the adoption of sons.... The adoption of sons is present in the Church of the Lord when the Spirit calls out: Abba, Father.... But it will be perfect when all who are worthy of seeing the face of God rise in incorruption, in honor and in glory. Then our humanity will know that it has been truly redeemed.”*

*[From a letter of St. Ambrose (Ep. 35)]*

*Celebrating the  
Extraordinary Jubilee  
Year of Mercy*

*Give us the Name of Mercy.  
The Name of Jesus that makes us children of God is a firm foundation of faith.*

*— Cf. St. Bernardine of Siena, Sermon 49*

Beloved Confreres, Parents, Family, Benefactors and Friends,

"I will sing to the Lord for He is gloriously triumphant... My strength and my courage is the Lord, and He has been my Saviour." [EXODUS 15:1-2] Thus sang the Israelites to the merciful God, Who worked wondrous miracles in order to liberate them from slavery, persecution, and their unjust oppressor. Throughout Sacred Scripture, we are constantly reminded by the Author, our heavenly Father, to "be not afraid", [MARK 6:50] but to trust in His infinite, all-powerful mercy. King David, so often hunted down by ruthless enemies, composed the child-like Psalms: "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom should I fear?" [PSALMS 27:1]. Judith, after saving her people from near destruction, sang that it was God Who "snatched me from the hands of my persecutors" [JUDITH 16:2]. At the Visitation, Our Blessed Mother Mary cried "His mercy is from age to age" [LUKE 1:46-55] in her song, the Magnificat. Jesus Christ Himself, after instituting the Eucharist and moments before beginning His redemptive Passion, led His apostles in singing Psalm 136, in which every verse exclaims "His mercy endures forever." [PSALMS 136:1-26; MATTHEW 26:30] The Church, as one, continually lifts up her voice in hopeful praise and petition to the Lord for His unfathomable mercy, particularly in the "prayer of the Church", the Liturgy. This upcoming Year of Mercy, then, is a crucially important time for the Church, as a whole, to raise her voice in a great song of trust and confidence in the tremendous mercy of our Loving Father. May we never forget, while fighting this fierce spiritual battle, the promise of our Almighty King, Jesus Christ:

"All power in heaven and on earth has been given to Me... And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age." [MATTHEW 28:19-20]

As we thank our Heavenly Father for His many blessings, especially for all of you and the immense gift of your constant love, prayers, support and encouragement, we wish you all a grace-filled Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy. May the Lord bless you and Our Lady keep you safe always.

Prayerfully in Jesus Christ through Mary, Mother of Mercy,

*Mother Mary Augustina O. Praem.*

Mother Mary Augustine, O. Praem., Prioress  
& the Norbertine Canonesses of the Bethlehem Priory of St. Joseph



**Deo Gratiās!**

The Sisters with our Pater Abbas, the Rt. Rev. Eugene Joseph Hayes, O. Praem, who

✠ "BY HIS ADVICE, HIS VIGILANCE, AND HIS VISITATIONS",  
[Constitutions of the Canonesses Regular of the Order of Prémontré, n. 124]

has diligently cared for our growing community since the very beginning.



— Pope Francis, *Misericordiae Vultus*, Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, April 11, 2015



## EXTRAORDINARY JUBILEE Year of Mercy

Immaculate Conception, December 8th, 2015 -  
Solemnity of Christ the King, November 24th, 2016

"We need constantly to contemplate the mystery of mercy. It is a wellspring of joy, serenity, and peace. Our salvation depends on it....

Mercy: the bridge that connects God and man, opening our hearts to the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness.

At times we are called to gaze even more attentively on mercy so that we may become a more effective sign of the Father's action in our lives. For this reason I have proclaimed an Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy as a special time for the Church, a time when the witness of believers might grow stronger and more effective."

### YEAR OF MERCY INDULGENCES

"An indulgence is a remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins" [Catechism of the Catholic Church n. 1471]

Many Indulgences may be gained during this Year of Mercy either for oneself or applied toward the deceased by:

- Making a pilgrimage to the Holy Door in either your individual Diocese or in Rome, along with the usual requirements of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the celebration of the Holy Eucharist with a reflection on mercy, and prayer for the Pope and his intentions.

The sick, elderly, and incarcerated may gain the same indulgence by uniting their sufferings to those of Christ, and fulfilling the above underlined conditions.

- Personally practicing one or more of the spiritual or corporal works of mercy, along with the above underlined conditions.

To read the entire bull of indiction for the Year of Mercy, "*Misericordiae Vultus*", and for additional information on how to gain the above indulgences and special Year of Mercy privileges please visit the official Year of Mercy website: [www.im.va](http://www.im.va)



## First Profession of Vows



During Mass on the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, December 12th, under the watchful gaze of Our Lady, Sr. Mary Elisabeth made her first Profession of Vows, in which we promise "a conversion of [our] ways and life in community, especially in poverty, consecrated chastity and obedience... for three years". She received the black veil, which symbolizes belonging "entirely to Christ the Lord and dedicated to the service of the Church." [Rite of Profession according to the Constitutions of Canonesses Regular of Prémontré]

"And Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit cried out... 'Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!'"  
— LUKE 1:41-42, Gospel reading for the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe



### 2015 FALL VISITORS AT THE PRIORY



In September, our annual community retreat was preached by Fr. Emmerich Vogt, O.P., who spoke to us throughout the week on "Liturgical Asceticism" -- the daily living out of the mysteries we celebrate in the liturgy. Fr. Emmerich underlined the need to overcome our fears and die to ourselves, so that we may rise in glory with Christ today.



In early October, we were blessed with a week of classes on Norbertine history, taught by our confrere from Daylesford Abbey, Fr. Ted Antry, O. Praem.

Father also assisted our advanced Latin class as they work to translate the biography of early Norbertine Abbot, St. Frederick, into English (LEFT).

In our upcoming newsletter: Visits from our Bishop, Armondo Ochoa, our Vicar of Religious, Sr. Invencion Canas, RAD, and parishoners from the local Tehachapi parish, St. Malachy's.



## Christmas Midnight Matins

“What a beautiful thing that the Church begins her daily prayer with the words ‘O God, come to my assistance, O Lord, make haste to help me’ [PSALM 70:2]! The assistance we ask for is already the first step of God’s mercy towards us. He comes to assist us in our weakness. And His help consists in helping us accept His presence and closeness to us. Day after day, touched by His compassion, we also can become compassionate towards others.”  
[Pope Francis, *Misericordiae Vultus*, Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, 2015]

## GENERAL ORDER OF THE Liturgy of the Hours

### HYMN:

The hymn praises God in the mystery or feast being celebrated and places the liturgical hour, the day, the choir, and the world before the Most Holy Trinity.

### PSALMODY:

Chanting the psalms of David is the heart of the Liturgy of the Hours. While the specific psalms differ from hour to hour, the heartfelt trust of a child in the Father can be heard as the resounding theme.

### READING:

Always from Sacred Scripture, the reading provides not only a pious thought or expression, but is truly the Word of God speaking to us through the writings of the prophets, evangelists, and apostles.

### RESPONSORY:

Composed from the rich tradition of the Church to complement the reading it follows, the responsory nourishes the seed that the Word has placed in our hearts, and seeks to bring this life-giving seed to fruitful contemplation.

### INTERCESSIONS:

Having praised God in the hymn, surrendered to Him in the psalms, and listened to Him in the reading, we now bring to Him the needs of the world, that He may grant it His mercy and peace.

### CONCLUDING PRAYERS:

Let us bless the Lord. And give Him thanks.  
May the souls of the faithful departed through the mercy of God rest in peace. Amen.

**“I will give thanks to You, O Lord my God, with all my heart, and I will glorify Your Name forever!”**

— PSALMS 85:12

## THE SEVEN HOURS OF THE DIVINE OFFICE IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

### I. Matins

“At midnight the cry went up: ‘See the bridegroom is coming, go out to meet Him!’” [MATTHEW 25:6] In the early life of the Church, prayers (or vigils) during the night were frequently recited by all the faithful as a way of looking towards the Lord’s second coming, of which we “know neither the day nor the hour” [MATTHEW 25:13]. In upholding this long-standing Church tradition, we strive to imitate the five prudent virgins, who were prepared, even at an unexpected hour, to welcome the Bridegroom with the lamps of their hearts lit with the flame of love.



*To Him alone I pledge my trust.; to Him alone I pledge my undivided love.*

— Second Antiphon for Vespers on the feast of St. Agnes, Virgin and Martyr, January 21st

### Daytime (III. TERCE, IV. SEXT, V. NONE)

Our Lord tells His every follower of “the necessity for them to pray always” [LUKE 18:1]; that is, to constantly remain in loving conversation with Him in our mind and heart. Yet, due to our fallen human nature, our thoughts and affections quickly stray from God and fly off to a million different things. The mid-morning (Terce), mid-day (Sext), and mid-afternoon (None) hours seek to remedy this by calling us back into the presence of our King.

✠ “Through profession ... you consecrate yourselves to the service of your abbey church in order to solemnly celebrate the sacred Liturgy, offer to God the praise of the whole Church, and gather the Christian people around the Lord. May your abbeys, priories, parishes and monasteries of nuns continue to fulfill this mission, so that the name of God may be glorified in every heart, and so that people today may find in you acceptance, availability, and apostolic zeal.”  
Letter of St Pope John Paul the Great to the Norbertines on the 850th anniversary of their presence in Bohemia, May 7th, 1993

For free podcasts and complete texts of each of the seven hours of the Divine Office visit: [www.DivineOffice.org](http://www.DivineOffice.org)  
Also available as an App for most Smartphones & Tablets

### II. Lauds

“Said in the morning in order that the first stirrings of our mind... may be consecrated to God and that we may take nothing in hand until we have been gladdened by the thought of God...” [St Basil the Great] This hour, celebrated as the sun is rising, brings the whole Church before her resurrected Lord, who appeared to those seeking Him “at daybreak” [LUKE 24:1]. By thus singing to our King in the morning, we seek to renew the commitment of every Christian to “throw off the works of darkness [and] put on the armor of light” [ROMANS 13:12] so as to allow Jesus Christ, the Morning Star, to rise in our hearts. [cf. 2 PETER 1:19]

### VI. Vespers

As darkness approaches at end of the work day the whole people of God draw together, gathered under the wings of the Lord, and solemnly chant to Him their thanks for the blessings and gifts received during the day, and beseech His protection against the “terror of the night” [PSALM 91:5]. As one we beg Him, in His infinite mercy, to keep the world free from the darkness of sin, violence and hatred, so that every human soul may always be filled with the radiance of His love and truth.

### VII. Compline

This final song of the day is an ode to the Father of creation, a lullaby to all His children, and the trusting surrender of our whole existence to Him as we sing; “Into your hands, Lord, I commend my spirit” [LUKE 23:46]. As the world is wrapped in the stillness of night, we entrust our souls, and the souls of our loved ones, to Mary, “loving mother of the Redeemer, gate of heaven, star of the sea” [Alma Redemptoris Mater, Marian Hymn after Compline] and bid our dear Savior, Jesus, “au revoir” until Matins.

## THE HOLY NAME OF JESUS: THE HEART OF CHRISTIAN PRAYER

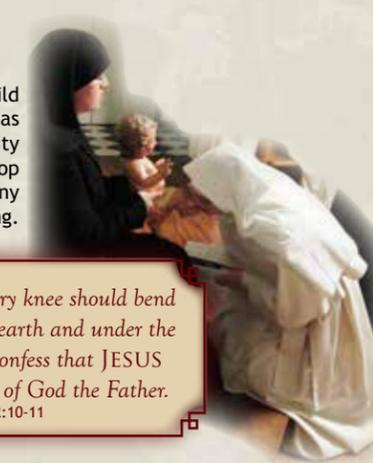
“She will bear a Son and you are to name him JESUS, because He will save His people from their sins.” [MATTHEW 1:21] The name JESUS, which means “Yahweh saves”, given to the Christ Child “by the angel before He was conceived in the womb” [LUKE 2:21] reveals the depths of love in the Sacred Heart of the God-Man who came “for the universal and definitive redemption from sins. It is the divine name that alone brings salvation, and henceforth all can invoke His name, for JESUS united Himself to all men through His Incarnation, so that ‘there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved. [ACTS 4:12]’ [Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 432] Our Lord Himself promises that “if you ask anything of Me in my name, I will do it” [JOHN 14:14], and for this reason every liturgical prayer concludes with the words “through our Lord JESUS Christ”. The name JESUS is in itself a very powerful prayer: it is a most perfect appeal to the Mercy of God. “Glorious name, gracious name, name of love and power! Through You sins are forgiven, through You enemies are vanquished, through You the sick are freed from their illness, through You those suffering in trials are made strong and cheerful. You bring honor to those who believe, You teach those who preach, You give strength to the toiler, You sustain the weary. Our love for You is ardent and glowing, our prayers are heard; the souls of those who contemplate You are filled with overflowing, and all the blessed in heaven are filled with Your glory. Sweet JESUS, grant that with them we too may reign through this your most holy name.” [St. Bernadine of Siena, Second Matins Reading for the Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus]

A Novice kneels to venerate the Child Jesus during our annual Christmas caroling procession to each nativity scene in the convent. At every stop each Sister bends low to kiss the tiny feet of her newborn King.

At the name of JESUS every knee should bend of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that JESUS Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.  
— PHILIPPIANS 2:10-11

— CONSTITUTIONS OF THE CANONESSES REGULAR OF THE ORDER OF PRÉMONTRÉ, N. 69 —

✠ “By the fact of our common priesthood, all our works, prayers, and apostolic endeavors, our daily work, both mental and physical relaxation, and even the duration of our lives, if they are all received and accomplished in the Holy Spirit, even the trials of our life, if borne patiently, become spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ [cf. 1 PETER 2:5], which we offer most lovingly to the Father during the celebration of the Eucharist in union with the offering of the Body of Christ. In this way we consecrate the whole world itself to God. ‘And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord JESUS, giving thanks to the Father through Him. [COLOSSIANS 3:17]’”



✠ "Our union with [those] who sleep in the peace of Christ is by no means destroyed, but, on the contrary, is strengthened by the communication of spiritual goods. Thus, we devoutly recall the memory of the deceased before the Lord's altar and we pray of their behalf."



The Church has always taught, in accordance with the Holy Scriptures [cf. 2 MACCABEES 12:43-46], that the bond between the faithful is never broken, not even by death. Once a soul is baptized into the Church, he or she remains forever united to the Mystical Body of Christ. "There is a communion and a reunion. For even dead, we are not at all separated from one another, because we all run the same course and we will find one another again in the same place. We shall never be separated, for we live for Christ, and now we are united with Christ as we go toward him." [St Simeon of Thessalonica] This unity is most perfect in the celebration of Mass: "In the Eucharist, the Church expresses her efficacious communion with the departed: offering to the Father in the Holy Spirit the sacrifice of the death and resurrection of Christ, she asks to purify His child (the deceased) of his sins and their consequences, and to admit him to the Paschal fullness of the table of the Kingdom." [Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 1689] After death, many of the faithful still bear the stain of sin upon their souls, and are, by their own choice, prevented from entering into total union with God. In God's great mercy, they are not cast away forever, but are given the chance to be purified. They are not left alone in this painful purification, for "if Job's sons were purified by their father's sacrifice, why would we doubt that our offerings for the dead bring them some consolation? Let us not hesitate to help those who have died and to offer our prayers for them." [St John Chrysostom, cf. JOB 1:5] Receiving the graces of our prayers and sacrifices, may our loved ones, and all the faithful departed, "joyfully hear this sentence, sweet as honey, from the Sovereign Judge: 'Come, blessed of my Father, receive the eternal kingdom.' Then, enjoying tranquility of unchanging peace, [they] will rejoice eternally in glory, where [they] will see God face to face and where [they] will know His infinite perfection." ✠ [Sermon of our Holy Father, St Norbert]

- MAY GOD REWARD YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY -



We share a very special "thank you" to our special friends on the planning/organizing committees for the *Night in the Vineyard* event here in Tehachapi (August 29, 2015) and the *Sisters Helping Sisters Autumn Tea* in Newport Beach (October 25, 2015). Through your faith-filled efforts, and the generosity of many new and long-standing friends attending these benefits, over \$150,000 was raised for our most pressing need: *our future chapel project*. While we could not attend these events due to our cloistered vocation, our confrere, Fr. John

Henry Hanson, O.Praem., gave the blessing at the *Vineyard* benefit, and our Provost, The Very Rev. Alphonsus Mary Hermes, O.Praem., attended and gave the blessing at the *Autumn Tea*. As mentioned in our earlier newsletters, given our increasing number of sisters, the chapel facility will include an annex with an auxiliary wing containing more cells to accommodate our growing community, a project estimated to cost over \$12 million, principally due to the site's steep slope. We are grateful for your prayers for us and this project, once more putting all of our trust in God and His loving providence.

"We thank the Lord for the gift of the vocation of men and women who, in monasteries and hermitages, have dedicated their lives to God... Let us not be remiss in our duty of spiritual and material closeness to them, in order that cloistered communities might be able to fulfill their important mission of prayer and silent work."

— Pope Francis, General Audience, November 18th, 2015

✠ "A truly common life is not restricted simply to putting only material goods in common, as Adam Scotus says: 'Know therefore, that you have offered and surrendered yourself to the Church of God; in everything that you are, in all that you know, and in everything that you can do.' Thus, we shall be witnesses, following the example of Christ, that all man has, and, even more, all that he is, has been given to him to be placed at the service of others to help them to obtain the happiness for which they are destined..."



Baking almond macaroons for our "spiritual children", who generously support us through gift shop purchases.

OUR HORARIUM  
(OR SCHEDULE)

(Please call for our Friday and Sunday schedules)

Midnight	Vigils – Office of Readings (Matins)
6:00 am	Morning prayer (Lauds) & Angelus
6:30 am	Martyrology & Chapter
7:15 am	Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament & Mid-morning prayer (Terce)
8:20 am	Benediction
8:30 am	The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass
10:00 am	Work, Class, or Study
11:45 am	Mid-day prayer (Sext), Angelus & Rosary
1:00 pm	Mid-afternoon prayer (None)
1:30 pm	Grand Silence - prayer, rest, exercise, etc.
2:30 pm	Work, Class, or Study
5:15 pm	Evening prayer (Vespers) & Angelus
5:45 pm	Lectio Divina
6:30 pm	Supper, followed by Recreation
8:00 pm	Night prayer (Compline)
9:00 pm	"Lights Out"



This retaining wall was erected by the new "priest cabin" near the entrance to our Priory.



Fostering our love for *communio* in all things, many sisters are learning to crochet "Granny Squares" which will eventually be made into one blanket.



Preparing liturgy books for guests is a cherished duty, as it enables us to share our love for the Sacred Liturgy with those of you who come to visit.

- DAIRY OPERATIONS UPDATE -



Mother and Sister unpack and prepare to move into the milk kitchen our new refrigerator. RIGHT: New calf Texas and her mother Callista.



With gratitude for your ongoing prayers and support, we look forward to sharing more recent dairy happenings with you in the coming months.

May God bless you for your support as we strive to become a self-sustaining community!



A Postulant assists in the milk kitchen by cutting freshly made butter. To her right is our new 135 gallon cheese vat -- Deo gratias!

THE NORBERTINE CANONRY OF THE BETHLEHEM PRIORY OF ST. JOSEPH  
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A special thank you to all our friends who assisted us by tinting "snow" on many, many pinecones for our Christmas wreath fundraiser. May God reward you!



"Seeing how great are the evils of the present day and how no human strength will suffice to quench this fire, it seems to me that it is like a war in which the enemy has overrun the whole country, and the Lord of the country, hard pressed, retires into a city, which He causes to be well fortified, and whence from time to time He is able to attack... Often this method gains the victory... for, as [the city] contains no traitors, but picked men, it can only be reduced by hunger. In our own conflict, however, we cannot be forced to surrender... we can die, but we cannot be conquered."

— St. Teresa of Avila (Doctor of the Church), *The Way of Perfection*

On the Cover:  
 "Adoration of the Holy Name of Jesus"  
 (circa 1604-05)  
 by Juan de las Roelas

The upper-portion of the painting depicts the Glory-of Heaven, and the lower-portion depicts the Church Militant, in the company of the Holy Family.

The feast of the Holy Name of Jesus was first promoted by St. Bernardine of Siena (15th century), who began the custom of depicting the holy name surrounded with rays and formed into the monogram IHS, as *Jesus* was often written *Ihesus*.

### ST. NORBERT STATUE & MEDALS

Please click on the PDF files at our website, [www.norbertinesisters.org](http://www.norbertinesisters.org), to learn more about and to order our St. Norbert statue and medals specially commissioned by the Norbertine Canonesses.

Now Available:  
 Bronze Medal



Also available in pewter and silver



Please kindly help us update our address & email database by sending us your current information.

### THE NORBERTINE CANONESSES' MONASTERY GIFT SHOP



✦ GIFT SHOP HOURS:  
 Daily 10-11:30 am, 2:30-5 pm  
 (except Fridays, 2:30-4:15 pm)

✦ FOR GIFT SHOP PURCHASES of Jam/Jelly, Macaroons, and Biscotti, and our many other items, please email:  
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 (661) 823-1066 - or -  
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- BETHANY GUEST HOUSE -  
 Sharing with you the Norbertine charism of prayer and hospitality



For parents visiting from afar, for those discerning religious vocations, for anyone seeking a time of

more intense prayer and solitude...it's for you.  
 (Day visits and overnight stays are possible.)

Call now to schedule your visit and for details (weather, dress, etc.): (661) 823-1066

*May God reward you for helping to build this first North American foundation of Norbertine canonesses!*