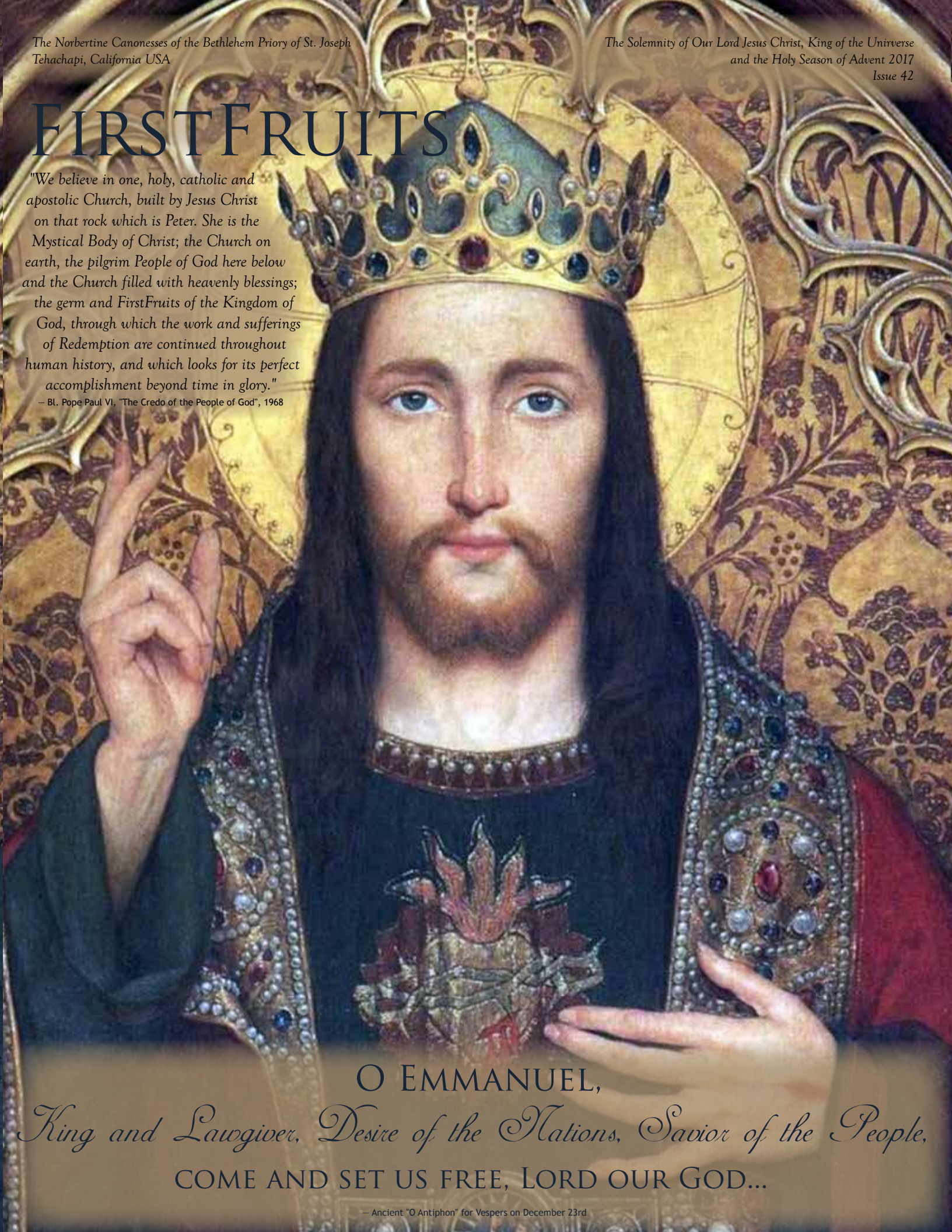


# FIRSTFRUITS

"We believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church, built by Jesus Christ on that rock which is Peter. She is the Mystical Body of Christ; the Church on earth, the pilgrim People of God here below and the Church filled with heavenly blessings; the germ and FirstFruits of the Kingdom of God, through which the work and sufferings of Redemption are continued throughout human history, and which looks for its perfect accomplishment beyond time in glory."

— Bl. Pope Paul VI, "The Credo of the People of God", 1968



O EMMANUEL,  
*King and Lawgiver, Desire of the Nations, Savior of the People,*  
COME AND SET US FREE, LORD OUR GOD...





FROM OUR PHOTO ARCHIVES, 2012  
Mother and her Subprioress attend the installation of His Excellency Armando X. Ochoa as Bishop of Fresno

In December 2016, our Bishop Ochoa opened a Year of Grace commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the establishment of our Fresno Diocese, with the general theme

**"SIEMPRE ADELANTE  
Keep Moving Forward!"**

This Year of Grace also included the celebration of His Excellency's fifth anniversary as the shepherd of our Fresno Diocese. We give thanks to God for Bishop Ochoa's faith-filled ministry to us all.

**BELOW:**A special "thank you" to Rev. Mark Maxon and the St. Malachy's community for again hosting our Solemn Professions at their parish. We look forward to the time when we can celebrate these important events in our monastery chapel.

*"The will of God gives joy to the heart,  
we see all things in its light!"*

—Cf. PSALM 19:8



## CELEBRATING 20 YEARS (1997-2017) OF NORBERTINE LIFE IN OUR COMMUNITY

*Our community with our Pater Abbas, priests and servers after the Mass of Solemn Profession at St. Malachy's Church in Tehachapi (September 9, 2017)*

On October 7, 1997, the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, a small group of five women (who would one day become Norbertine Canonesses) was erected as a "public association of the faithful," and a new chapter was inserted into the history of Premonstratensian women, a history that tells of loving service, ardent devotion to Christ, and self-sacrifice for the Church and all men. The story began with Ricvera, a young noble widow who was inspired by the apostolic ideal proposed by St. Norbert, giving all of her possessions and her very self to the foundation at Prémontré, receiving the veil from St. Norbert himself in 1121. Working in the monastery hospital and guesthouse, she became known as "a consoler of the poor, the destitute, and the desperate," characteristics which would later appear, either physically or spiritually, in many Norbertine canonesses. One such woman was Blessed Gertrude (13th c.), the daughter of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, a Norbertine Abbess who said, while bathing the sick, "*How beautiful it is that we are allowed to bathe the Savior!*" When the feast of Corpus Christi was established in 1264, Bl. Gertrude's convent embraced

it with devotion, despite the reluctance of many in the Church. This great devotion to the Eucharistic Lord is another trait of St. Norbert's daughters, including Ludolpha Anselma (1883-1955), an Abbess from Poland, of whom it is said quite simply that "*the Holy Eucharist was the center of her life.*" This no doubt gave her the energy to found eleven houses of Norbertines in Hungary, and the strength to bear their later suppression at Communist hands. Endurance under difficulty has marked both the history and individual lives of our Order's sisters. Maria Rosa Vidal Martinez (1924-1988), a sister from Spain, was called to offer herself as a victim for the Church and for her fellow men, enduring an extremely painful illness for seven years, saying through it all, "*My life is in God's hands. Therefore, I must bear everything with patience.*" It is said: "*her life was a continuous 'yes' to the will of God.*" We pray that, through the intercession of all of our Norbertine Sisters who have gone before us, we, too, may possess the virtues and strength which have marked this almost 900-year old family, and, like them, be true daughters of St. Norbert.



"THESE ARE THE ONES WHO FOLLOW THE LAMB,  
*the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords,*  
WHEREVER HE GOES...."

— Cf. REVELATION 14:4 & 19:16

Beloved Confreres, Parents, Family, Benefactors and Friends,  
*Laudetur Jesus Christus!* As we celebrate the reign of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, we throw open the gates of our hearts, joyfully inviting the King of Glory to enter in and rule as the supreme Sovereign of our lives [cf. PSALM 24]. In the coming penitential season of of Advent, we prepare to receive Him at Christmas, knowing that, as we draw closer to Him, Christ draws us all closer together as a family, members of His Kingdom. By our prayer, penance, and sacrifice, may we strive to do away with those things that rupture this communion with God and our fellow men, so that, with one heart and one soul, we may love Him perfectly as He descends upon our altars—not only at Christmas, but indeed at every Mass. Desiring to praise Him with all the beauty and dignity that such a gracious King deserves, we are grateful to all who have assisted us thus far in our efforts to build our future chapel, a sacred home for the King, one that will also accommodate our growing community and the faithful who are drawn to our monastery to participate in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and Liturgy of the Hours. With you, we pray that from our future chapel in this little valley, there may one day be a great exaltation of jubilation to flood the whole earth, that all men may know:

*"Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of the Father!"* — PHILIPPIANS 2:11

May this Advent Season be a time of joyful anticipation and prayerful preparation,  
and may your Christmas be blessed with His grace and peace, the peace that the world cannot give.  
Prayerfully in Christ the King through His Blessed Mother,

*Mother Mary Augustine O. Praem.*

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



FROM THE CRIB...



*"We must strive to follow and fulfill in ourselves the various stages of Christ's plan as well as His mysteries, and frequently beg Him to bring them to completion in us and in the whole Church. They are complete, indeed, in the person of Jesus, but not in us, who are His members, nor in the Church, which is His mystical body. He desires us to perfect the mystery of His incarnation and birth by forming Himself in us and being reborn in our souls*



TO THE CROSS...



*through the blessed Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist. He fulfills His hidden life in us, hidden with Him in God. He intends to perfect the mysteries of His passion, death, and resurrection, by causing us to suffer, die, and rise again with Him and in Him. Finally, He wishes to fulfill in us the state of His glorious and immortal life, when He will cause us to live a glorious, eternal life with Him in heaven."* — St. John Eudes



TO THE CROWN OF GLORY



Art by the Norbertine Canonesses of the Bethlehem Priory of St. Joseph



"WOMEN'S CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE HAS ALWAYS REPRESENTED

*in the Church, and for the Church, Her praying heart...*

THE NATURAL FRUIT OF A NEED TO RESPOND WITH LOVE TO THE LOVE OF CHRIST THE BRIDEGROOM."

— Apostolic Constitution, *Vultum Dei quaerere*, July 22, 2016, no.5

*As we thank God for the many blessings He has given to our community over these past twenty years, we thank Him also for the blessings He has showered upon all the children of St. Norbert as we look ahead to*



THE 900TH ANNIVERSARY  
OF OUR ORDER:

*Christmas Day, 2021*

*begging that, through the intercession of our Holy Father Norbert, God may visit us with the graces necessary to fulfill the vocation that He has given us as Premonstratensian Canons and Canonesses, and so set the world on fire with the zeal of St. Norbert.*



OUR HOLY FATHER  
*St. Norbert*  
1080 - 1134

*2017 Annual Community Retreat*

Rev. Sebastian Walsh, O.Praem, our confrere from St. Michael's Abbey

"LIFE IN COMMUNION"

"What does [communion] mean? What is it about a *communion* that differs from just a mere community? A community can be defined as a number of people working for a common good. But a *communion* is a multitude of persons in which each person somehow lives the life of, shares the life, of every other person in the communion... Religious communities are not just communities, but are, more profoundly, *communions*, a reflection of the communion of the whole church, and even more profoundly of the communion within the Trinity. And we are called not only to be a *communion*, but to be visible as a *communion*, and therefore as a witness... The fact that you are contemplative does not disqualify you from apostolic work. *But your primary apostolate as contemplative sisters is to witness to communion: to witness to the inner life of God, that communion within the life of God.* The reason why you are all living together and constantly together, constantly being united over and over and over again in prayer at different times, is because you are supposed to witness to the communion of heaven, and it's more like that in heaven.

In heaven we will always be together ... all the time."





# Thy Kingdom Come, Thy Will be Done, on Earth as it is in Heaven

## THE LITURGICAL LIFE OF THE *Canonesses of the Bethlehem Priory* IN THE SEASON OF ADVENT



From our Liturgy books: the Prophets Jeremiah and Isaiah with Our Lady awaiting the Savior Who is to come.

The Solemnity of Christ the King—the Lamb, and the Lord of Lords—is celebrated with unrivaled majesty on the last Sunday of the liturgical year, as our eyes are lifted to the heavenly glory our King possesses, and all the choirs of angels join the voice of the Church in great jubilation. Yet, not a full week later, on Saturday evening, our hearts grow solemn and we enter into the season of Advent, a season of watchful vigilance. We contemplate, in this season, the coming of Christ, the longing of our hearts, mirroring that of the patriarchs and prophets. This is a season of penance, a season in which we deepen our awareness that we are in dire need of a Savior, and a season to prepare ourselves: for the Savior that *will* come to us. The liturgical texts of Advent emphasize this message over and over again: *"Let us cleanse our hearts for the coming of our great King, that we may be ready to welcome Him; He is coming and will not delay."* [Antiphon during the 2nd week of Advent]

These sentiments are not simply referring to the remembrance of a historical event that happened over two thousand years ago in the little town of Bethlehem: Jesus Christ longs to be born into our hearts, that He may live, and love, and grow in us. The season of Advent prepares us to recognize and welcome Him by quieting our surroundings and senses through the preparedness of penance, and stokes our desire for Him by placing on our lips the constant plea for Him to "come." As the day of His birth draws nearer, these pleas become more urgent and solemn in the ancient "O Antiphons," sung with the Magnificat at Vespers in the week preceding Christmas. "O Wisdom... O Sacred Lord... O Flower of Jesse... O Key of David... O Radiant Dawn... O King of all nations... O Emmanuel... come and set us free, Lord our God." In our Order, an eighth "O antiphon" is added the day before Christmas Eve, an antiphon of wonder and awe at the beautiful tabernacle of the Lord, she who alone was perfectly prepared for His coming; "O Virgin of virgins, how can this be done? Because neither has there before been seen one like yourself, nor shall there be one after you. [Our Lady responds] Daughters of Jerusalem, why do you wonder at me? Divine is the mystery which you perceive." And so it is that Our Lady, the gentle Mother of God, takes us by the hand and leads us into the cave where He-Who-is-to-save-us will be born. With our hearts immersed in the sacred silence of the moment, we await with our expectant Mother for the moment of His birth into the little cave of our stony hearts.



The rejection of the Mother of God and St. Joseph in Bethlehem

Artist: Carl Rahl (attr), "Josef und Maria auf Herbergssuche" (1865)



Entering the birthplace of Christ



The Sisters to be professed lie prostrate during the Litany of the Saints



Sr. Mary Gertrude signs her Profession on the altar.

## *The Solemn Profession* OF CANONESSES REGULAR OF PRÉMONTRÉ

Sr. Mary Monica, Sr. Mary Gertrude,  
Sr. Mary Peter, and Sr. Mary Bernadette

SEPTEMBER 9, 2017

"In the book of Acts is an image of the prototype, the exemplar, of community life: the intense life made possible by oneness in mind and heart, having all things in common, carrying out the prayers, surrounding Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Now, this image from Acts of the first Christian community is very appropriate for our Sisters, because it is this

life that they have been schooled in and formed in over these years. Different from other cloistered communities, our Sisters spend their days not in their cells as solitaries, but side-by-side: side-by-side with all the Sisters day in and day out. Together in prayer, work, and recreation. And in this life, the prologue to the Rule of St. Augustine

stands each day as the guiding star: 'Let God be loved in all things, and then our neighbor. For these are the principal commands given to us.' As they are about to be consecrated for life to the closer following of Christ, as they consecrate themselves in the form of an oblation of themselves - all that they are, and all that they have, and all that they do - they can rest assured of the grace of God. They can rest assured of the loving support of their Sisters, their Confreres, and indeed all of us here today, to whom they and their life mean so very much."

— Excerpt from the homily of  
The Right Reverend  
Abbot Eugene Hayes, O.Praem.,  
our Pater Abbas,  
given at the Solemn Profession.



Sr. Mary Monica, and the other newly-professed, give the "kiss of peace" to their Sisters in community.



Sr. Mary Peter, after receiving her ring.



Sr. Mary Bernadette receives Holy Communion with the other newly-professed Sisters.

## THE BIRTH OF OUR ORDER: *On Christmas Day in Prémontré* A 900-YEAR DEVOTION TO THE INCARNATION



Art by the Norbertine Canonesses of the Bethlehem Priory of St. Joseph

On Christmas day, in a valley in France, almost 900 years ago, a little band of poorly-clad men knelt in adoration before the altar of their Lord and God, laying their hearts and vows at His feet. These men—St. Norbert and his early companions—were no strangers to the poverty and self-emptying that Christmas recalls; they voluntarily chose to follow a God Who took *"the form of a slave"* [PHILIPPIANS 2:7] out of love for men. At the beginning of his conversion, St. Norbert was *"barefoot and clothed in a woolen tunic and content with only a cloak, with no roof over his head and no sure residence, [and] with strenth of mind overcame the harsh winter and sharp cold, with Christ as his only leader..."* [Vita B] His early followers *"entrusted themselves to him so much and clung to him with such affectionate friendship,"* [Vita B] imitating his example of self-emptying poverty to such an extent that *"Norbert's followers had scarcely any care or concern for corporal things. Rather, they focused all their effort on spiritual things, on following the Sacred Scriptures and Christ as their leader."* [Vita B] These accounts of the early days at Prémontré breathe forth a return to the cave of Bethlehem: *"No work was so vile that they refused it. Obedience was prompt... Silence was perpetual in every place... [Norbert] wanted them to fast... [and] to ride on donkeys (instead of horses)..."* [Vita B]

And so, on Christmas day in a valley in California, many years after our Order was born, a little band of white-clad women kneel in adoration before their Lord and God, laying their hearts and vows at His feet. May true devotion to the Divine Infant, Whom St. Norbert imitated in his poverty and self-emptying, live on in the Order of this humble and penitent man, and may these latter days of the Order breathe forth a return to the cave of Bethlehem and spread to all the earth.



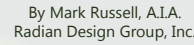
FROM OUR PHOTO ARCHIVES, 1999

The founding five Sisters pray in front of the crèche at St. Michael's Abbey.



*Future Chapel*

## PHASE II OF OUR MONASTERY EXPANSION PROJECT

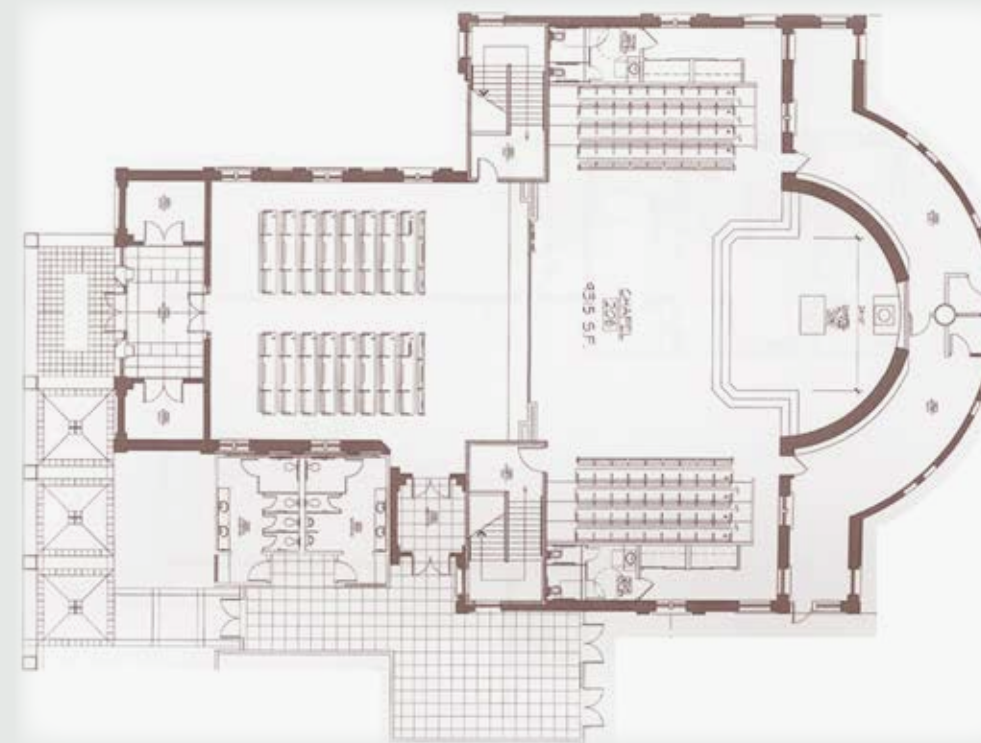


## Why is a Chapel So Important?

More than just another building or gathering place, a chapel is truly "the house of God and the gate of heaven" [Liturgy for the Dedication of a Church], a privileged place where the Sacred and Almighty God dwells among men in a powerful and very real way; it is a portal of great grace for the whole world. A canoness is a woman religious who vows stability to a particular church, who offers and dedicates her whole life to the praise of God in that specific place, so that the hallowed walls surrounding the Tabernacle of God will always ring with the beautiful prayer of God's people: *the Liturgy*. This threshold of heaven is not, and is never intended to be, for a limited group of women alone, but it is for all the people, that all may have a safe haven and a

home in which they may participate in man's highest purpose and deepest desire: *the worship of God*. As Norbertine Canonesses, though cloistered, we are required by our Constitutions to carry out the Liturgy in a suitable place where the faithful may participate. Thus, a chapel will provide the necessities for our community to carry out the vocation entrusted to us: to praise God in His holy place and with His holy people, so that we all may witness to the life of heaven, where all worship before God's throne and together cry, with one voice:

*"Amen. Alleluia!"*



PHASE II OF OUR  
*Monastery Expansion Project*

WILL PROVIDE:

- ✦ CHAPEL *large enough for our growing community, for the lay faithful attending our Liturgical Prayers, and a proper setting for celebrating the Sacred Liturgy.*
- ✦ WING & ACCESSORY AREAS *including:*
  - ✦ ADDITIONAL CELLS *as we are rapidly approaching maximum capacity in our new monastery building*
  - ✦ MONASTERY GIFT SHOP
  - ✦ VISITING PARLORS *for family visits with the Sisters*



This delicate and beautiful 130-year-old stained glass window—depicting our Lord's Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension—will serve as the centerpiece of our future chapel, as we have secured its purchase with a down payment (thus reserving it until paid in full). The window consists of three panels which form a triptych of the Paschal Mystery. The triptych is crowned with five circular tracery pieces, with the total size being 97-1/2" x 266". The window will be mounted high behind the altar, dictating the design of the chapel and setting its liturgical theme. In the tradition of St. Norbert, who wished his sons and daughters to be angels of the Resurrection, proclaiming by our lives the joy of the disciple who denies himself and daily carries his cross in the footsteps of Christ, this window aptly expresses the meaning of our liturgical apostolate as canoneses, as well as the witness of our Norbertine consecration.

FRIENDS OF THE NORBERTINE CANONESSES OF TEHACHAPI

## 2017 Future Chapel Fundraisers

We wish to express our deep gratitude to the three different groups of "Friends of the Norbertine Canonesses of Tehachapi" for hosting four events this year to benefit our future chapel: The "Vocation of Love" Los Angeles brunch (pictured left) held on October 1 (feast of St. Thérèse, patroness of our Fresno Diocese); the Orange Fall Luncheon (pictured right) held on October 22 (feast of Pope St. John Paul II); and the evening benefits held in August in both Tehachapi and Orange. Through their efforts and generosity, these events netted over \$170,000 for our Phase II project. We are very grateful for the presence of guest speakers His Excellency Timothy Broglio, Archbishop of the U.S. Military Services (top left) and His Excellency Timothy Freyer, Auxiliary Bishop of Orange (top right), both of whom we are told gave moving talks about our cloistered mission of prayer and sacrifice, the critical need for our vocation in today's world, and the importance of our future chapel. Other speakers included stained glass expert Kevin Grabowski (center left), who explained the integral role stained glass windows have in Catholic history, architecture, and the Sacred Liturgy, as well as introducing and discussing our centerpiece window (facing page); and our architect Mark Russell (center right). Although as cloistered canonesses we cannot be physically present at these events, we are spiritually united with all, serving as the hidden "praying heart" of Christ's Mystical Body. We ask God to bless all who attended, with thanksgiving for your charity and for enabling us to continue to serve Holy Mother Church as cloistered contemplative Norbertine Canonesses.

*God Bless You!*



Archbishop  
Timothy  
Broglia



Bishop  
Timothy  
Freyer



Kevin Grabowski



Mark Russell



PHASE II *Monastery Expansion* UPDATE

Phase II of our expansion project will address the acute space needs of our growing community, while providing the proper ecclesial and monastic architecture for the worship of God and celebration of the Sacred Liturgy, the heart of our Norbertine canonical vocation. The estimated cost of the construction of Phase II is \$12 million, taking into account the 36-foot slope area on which the tri-level chapel and wing will be built. With a minimum of \$8 million required to go forward with Phase II, we put all of our trust in the Lord, like our Holy Father St. Norbert: When he desired to build a monastery in the valley of Prémontré, he *"hooked the anchor of hope to his unshaken faith,"* trusting that God would provide *"the place in which the celebration of divine worship might take place for all time."* [Vita B]



Monies Needed  
\$12,000,000

Current Goal		<b>\$12.0M</b>
\$8,000,000		<b>\$8.0M</b>
Total Restricted & Reserved Funds		<b>\$2.0M</b>
\$1,355,000		

PHOTO by R. BELCHER

*"Then I will bring to My holy mountain and make joyful in My house of prayer;  
Their holocausts and sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar, for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples."— ISAIAH 56:7*





THE NORBERTINE CANONRY OF THE BETHLEHEM PRIORY OF ST. JOSEPH  
17831 Water Canyon Road  
Tehachapi, California 93561-7686 USA

NON PROFIT  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Bakersfield, CA  
Permit #110

A very grateful "thank you" to all of our friends who have donated hay in abundance, contributed funds to build our new hay barn, and volunteered the mowing, racking, baling, and stacking of hundreds of hay bales, which we use to feed our cows, goats, bucks, and sheep.

"HERE I STAND, KNOCKING AT THE DOOR.  
If anyone hears me calling and opens the door, I will enter his house and have supper with him, and he with Me."



Artist: William Holman Hunt, "Light of the World" (1854)

"I will give the victor the right to sit with Me on My throne,  
as I Myself won the victory and  
took My seat beside My Father on His throne."  
— REVELATION 3:20-21

## Norbertine Canonesses — WEBSITE —

- ✦ Online Monastery Gift Shop
- ✦ Photo Gallery
- ✦ Our Horarium in Photos
- ✦ Information on  
Our Holy Founder, St. Norbert
- ✦... and more

[WWW.NORBERTINESISTERS.ORG](http://WWW.NORBERTINESISTERS.ORG)

THE NORBERTINE CANONESSES  
are now enrolled in the eScrip program

eScrip allows you to sign up and choose an organization to which 3% of every purchase you make at participating stores is automatically donated. All contributions to our new account will go to our "Future Chapel Fund". Please consider learning more and signing up for free at

[WWW.ESCRIP.COM](http://WWW.ESCRIP.COM)

and selecting

NORBERTINE ASSOCIATION OF ST. JOSEPH  
eScrip Group ID - 500654139

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

## OUR PRAYER SCHEDULE

Please visit our website for our full schedule

- 12:00 am Matins
- 6:00 am Lauds & Angelus
- 6:30 am Chapter (Martyrology, Reading the Rule, etc.)
- 7:15 am Adoration & Terce
- 8:30 am The Sacrifice of the Mass
- 11:45 am Sext, Angelus & Community Rosary
- 1:00 pm None
- 5:15 pm Vespers & Angelus
- 5:45 pm Lectio Divina
- 8:00 pm Compline

## 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  
Please visit us at the Monastery or at our online Gift Shop at [www.norbertinesisters.org](http://www.norbertinesisters.org)

✦ WE ARE HERE TO OFFER PRAYERS FOR  
YOU AND YOUR INTENTIONS -  
You are welcome to call us:  
(661) 823-1066 - or -  
email us: [pray\\_req@cybersurfers.net](mailto:pray_req@cybersurfers.net) or  
[MotherMaryA@aol.com](mailto:MotherMaryA@aol.com).

*May God reward you for helping to build this first North American "communion" of Norbertine Canonesses!*