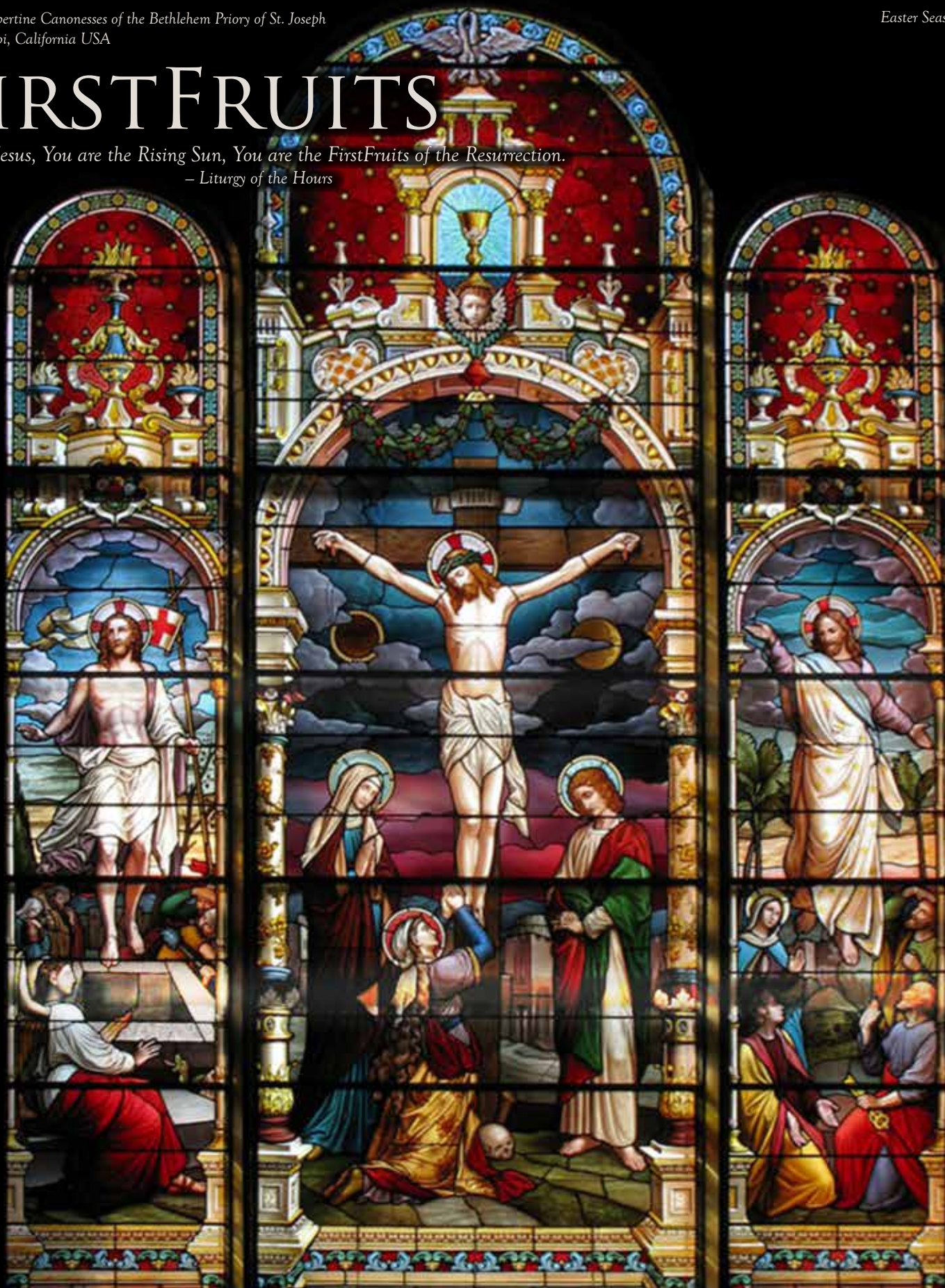


# FIRSTFRUITS

*Lord Jesus, You are the Rising Sun, You are the FirstFruits of the Resurrection.*  
— Liturgy of the Hours



*“The Sacred Liturgy is a radiant expression of the Paschal Mystery.”*

— POPE EMERITUS BENEDICT XVI





Dear Confreres, Parents, Family, Friends and Benefactors,

*Laudetur Jesus Christus!* The Sacred Liturgy, the official public prayer of the Church, is the Church's animating center and the center of Christian life. As a radiant expression of the Paschal Mystery in which the Lord draws us to Himself and calls us to communion with each other, especially through the Holy Eucharist, one appreciates ever more deeply the *sacrifice which is at its very heart*. Taking the form of Christ on the Cross, of the love that in dying makes a total gift of itself, Christ's self-surrender to the loving and saving will of the Father teaches us that losing oneself is the only way of finding oneself (cf. Mk 8:35; Mt 10:39). How blessed we are as God's People to renew this sacrifice daily, especially at Holy Mass, the *raison d'être* of every church. As we continue to place all of our trust in God and His timing for our future chapel, may all of God's children come to recognize the infinite value of the Sacred Liturgy and every church—a temple where God dwells in our very midst.

Joyfully in Jesus Christ, our Risen Lord, and His Holy Mother,

*Mother Mary Augustine O. Praem.*

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



Our community was blessed with a visit from our Abbot General, The Most Reverend Thomas Handgrätinger, O. Praem., with our confrere Rev. Charbel Gribavac, O. Praem. (December 13, 2017)



Stained glass window made by the Norbertine Canonesses

## — Mary, Mother of the Church —

Pope Francis instituted a new memorial honoring the Blessed Virgin Mary under this title, to be celebrated the Monday after Pentecost (May 21 in 2018). "The dark all-enveloping space [of the medieval] cathedrals is evocative of the womb in which Christ Himself was nurtured and in which all members of the Church come to birth. From the earliest centuries, the Church was referred to as 'mother,' mater ecclesia; and Mary, the Mother of Jesus, was closely associated with it as its symbol, protector and premier member."

— Bishop Robert Barron

## Rev. Gerlac András Horváth, O. Praem

SEPTEMBER 11, 1921  
— MARCH 12, 2018

— *Requiescat in pace* —



From 2001

"Fr. Gerlac wrote these words: 'Faith in the Eucharist is truly a pair of wings which today, as it has for nineteen centuries, lifts humanity above the deep depths. If society can be saved, it is from there that salvation will come.' 'C'est de la que lui viendra la salut.' These words of sublime insight are Father's own and he has lived by them."

— An excerpt from Fr. Hugh Barbour's homily on the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee of our beloved confrere, Rev. Gerlac András Horváth (9/11/21 — 3/12/18), the last of the seven Hungarian Founding Fathers of St. Michael's Abbey to return to the Lord.



## Community Retreat

MARCH 1 - 10, 2018

Our retreat was led by long-time friend Rev. Gabriel O'Donnell, O.P., who has assisted our community since it's founding days. Speaking about the charism of St. Paul in the monastic life, Father pointed out that, "for St. Paul, Jesus Christ is the answer to everything"; He is the purpose of the monastic life, in which we seek to 'know oneself, accept oneself, and forget oneself.'" We thank Father O'Donnell for all that he has done and continues to do for our community.

## Phase I of our Monastery Expansion Project

— Completed in Spring, 2013 —



*Deo Gratias!*

### PHASE I INCLUDES:

- ✦ A professional MILK KITCHEN with a separate cheese aging room
- ✦ A second professional KITCHEN for gift shop items and everyday use
- ✦ GARTH (monastic enclosed garden)
- ✦ REFECTORY (monastic dining room)
- ✦ CHAPTER ROOM (monastic meeting room for daily Chapter, House Chapters & Canonry Chapters)
- ✦ DORMITORIES with cells for 48 sisters
- ✦ COMMON/RECREATION ROOM
- ✦ ART ROOMS ✦ INFIRMARY ✦ STORAGE
- ✦ LAUNDRY ROOM ✦ MUD ROOM

Thank you to the countless friends and benefactors who helped with this first phase of our construction, especially:

- ✦ \$600,000 from an anonymous donor
- ✦ \$300,000 grant from the Dan Murphy Foundation
- ✦ \$250,000 from a long time friend and benefactor of our community



# Phase II of our Monastery Expansion Project:

## Our Most Pressing Need

### PHASE II WILL PROVIDE:

#### ✦ MONASTERY CHAPEL

large enough for our growing community and the lay faithful attending our liturgical prayers, with ecclesial and monastic architecture proper to celebrating the Sacred Liturgy, a house of prayer fit for God, where He dwells in our midst

#### ✦ WING & ACCESSORY AREAS, including:

##### — ADDITIONAL CELLS

as we are rapidly approaching maximum capacity in Phase I

##### — MONASTERY GIFT SHOP

— VISITING PARLORS  
for family visits with the Sisters



By Mark Russell, A.I.A.  
Radian Design Group, Inc.

*"If the Lord does not build the house, in vain do the builders labor."*

— Psalm 127:1

#### — THE PRAISE OF GOD — IN THE CITY OF THE RISEN CHRIST

"In the construction of the Chartres Cathedral, people from all walks of life and social strata — lords, ladies, soldiers, and common workers — came together in the grueling task of transporting stones, wine, grain, and oil to the work site. They labored side by side and in reverential silence — and all forgave their enemies. What we see here is a hint of the new city made possible by the authority of the risen Christ at work in His Church. When we visit [a church] and move into the magnificent light of the place, it is the true God that we are meant to praise and this new world that we are compelled to imagine."

— Bishop Robert Barron

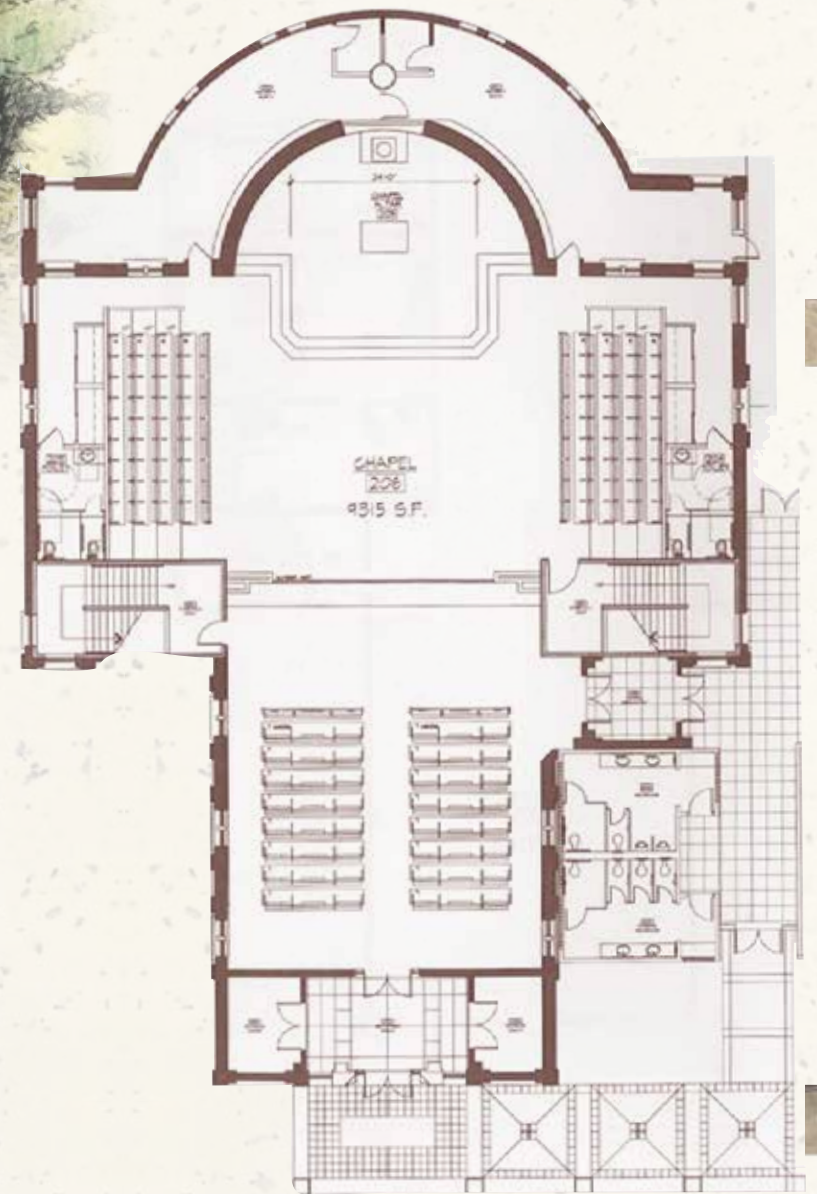
#### — THE LOVE OF GOD — OUR STRUCTURE AND FOUNDATION

"If God is self-forgetting love even to the point of death, then we must be such love. The cross, in short, must become the very structure of the Christian life. And this is why medieval Christians worked the cross into the structures of their most sacred buildings. They determined that when we gaze at the splendor of the cathedral, we are gazing, inescapably, at the cross. And they determined that as we walk through it, we are, unavoidably, walking through the cross. The cruciform [churches] teach us that we must never forget what God has done on our behalf, and we must never fail to make that love the structure and foundation of our lives."

— Bishop Robert Barron



Our current, twice expanded, converted chapel still housed in the former game room of the original ranch house.



PHASE III OF OUR MONASTERY  
TO BE DISCUSSED  
IN A FUTURE FIRSTFRUITS...

### Monies Needed

\$12,000,000

\$12.0M

\$8.0M

\$2.0M

Current Goal  
\$8,000,000

Total Restricted  
& Reserved Funds  
\$1,650,000

R. BELCHER

For more information on Phase II of our Monastery Expansion Project, please contact us or visit our website:  
[WWW.NORBERTINESISTERS.ORG](http://WWW.NORBERTINESISTERS.ORG)

Like those faith-filled souls who built the grand Chartres Cathedral, we thank all of our generous friends and benefactors who are assisting through your prayers, fundraising efforts, and donations of every kind to help build our humble house of God in the mountains of Tehachapi.





Renewing our Baptismal Vows  
at the Easter morning Mass

## — What is the Sacred Liturgy? —

The Sacred Liturgy is the true worship of God, enacted by Jesus Christ and His Body, the Church, through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Church has liturgy in obedience to God, especially the explicit command of Jesus Christ when he instituted the Holy Eucharist: "Do this in remembrance of me" (Lk 22:19). It encompasses the Sacraments (Holy Mass and the Eucharist, Baptism, Confession, Confirmation, Matrimony, Holy Orders, and Anointing of the Sick) and the Liturgy of the Hours (Matins, Lauds, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers and Compline).

Why is the liturgy important? One reason is that the Church is the "Body of Christ" or the "Bride of Christ." In the liturgy we do not, therefore, pray merely as individuals but as members of His Body on earth and in heaven. The Liturgy is a sacred and time-transcending prayer not of one culture or era, but of the eternal heavenly Jerusalem. In the earthly liturgy, we share in a foretaste of that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the Holy City of Jerusalem toward which we journey as pilgrims, where Christ is sitting at the right hand

of God, Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle.

Therefore, in the Liturgy we follow the forms of the Catholic rites drawn from Scripture, developed by Tradition and approved by the Magisterium (the Church's teaching office) so that all the members of the Church may worship God together in unity of heart, mind and body.

Finally, as "in all religions, sacrifice is at the heart of worship... now sacrifice takes the form of the Cross of Christ, of the love that dying makes a gift of itself. Such sacrifice has nothing to do with destruction. It is an act of new creation, the restoration of creation to its true identity. All worship is now a participation in this 'Pasch' of Christ, in His 'passing over' from death to life, to the unity of God and man. Thus, Christian worship is the practical application and fulfillment of the words that Jesus proclaimed on the first day of Holy Week, Palm Sunday, in the temple of Jerusalem: 'I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself' [JOHN 12:32]." — Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, excerpt from *The Spirit of the Liturgy*



Altar of Repose on Holy Thursday



Tenebrae on Good Friday

# Our Horarium — The Monastic Schedule

"With the Lord in the center and the angels round about her, the nuns (representing the praying Church) offer the sacrifice of praise, the Liturgy of the Hours, sanctifying time day after day."  
— cf. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI



Top to bottom: Entering the cell, working in the kitchen, prayerful contemplation during grand silence in the garth, sharing supper in the refectory



Top to bottom: Reading the Church's Martyrology at daily Chapter, waxing cheese in the milk kitchen, studying in the Novitiate, evening of common recreation

- 12:00 AM**  
Office of Readings (Matins)
- 6:00 AM**  
Morning prayer (Lauds)  
& Angelus
- 6:30 AM**  
Chapter (Martyrology & Rule read)
- 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,  
followed by dinner
- 1:00 PM**  
Mid-afternoon Prayer (None)
- 1:30 PM**  
Grand Silence
- 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"





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## — A Special Thank You —

to all of our generous friends who help with our "ongoing wish list items." Pictured above are the Sisters at recreation cracking donated walnuts, an important source of protein for us since we perpetually abstain from meat in the great monastic tradition, following in the footsteps of our holy founder, St. Norbert.

Ideas and articles in this newsletter were inspired by *The Spirit of the Liturgy* by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, *Heaven in Stone and Glass* by Bishop Robert Barron, and *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

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

## Norbertine Canonesses

### — WEBSITE —

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

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

- ✦ MONASTERY 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 our website 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).



*Procession to the Altar of Repose  
on Holy Thursday*

**On the Cover:** The 130-year-old, German-crafted stained glass window depicting Our Lord's Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension will serve as the centerpiece of our future chapel. It will be mounted high behind the altar, from which the sacraments of the Paschal Mystery flow and where the Norbertine Canonesses gather day and night together to celebrate the Sacred Liturgy. Just as the altar is the center of the church, so, too, it is the altar and center of the life of the Norbertine Canoness, where she daily offers herself with her Spouse in sacrifice for the glory of the Father and the salvation of souls.

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