

The Norbertine Canonesses

of the Bethlehem Priory of St. Joseph

# FIRST FRUITS

The Queenship of Mary, August 22, 2019 / Issue 47



“THE KING LOVED HER AND SHE WON HIS FAVOR AND BENEVOLENCE.

*So He placed the royal diadem on her head and made her Queen.”*

— Esther 2:17

— With Gratitude for Our Dedicated Pastors —

We wish to thank the Bishop Emeritus of the Fresno Diocese,  
**THE MOST REVEREND ARMANDO X. OCHOA**,  
for his leadership and generous service to the Church,  
and we offer our heartfelt  
prayers, congratulations and welcome to  
**THE MOST REVEREND JOSEPH V. BRENNAN**,  
as he begins his ministry as the  
Sixth Bishop of our Fresno Diocese.

*“O Jesus, Eternal Priest, let Thy holy love surround them and shield them  
from the world’s contagion. Bless their labors with abundant fruit, and  
may the souls to whom they have ministered be here below their joy and  
consolation, and in Heaven their beautiful and everlasting crown.”*

O Mary, Mother of the Good Shepherd, protect them.

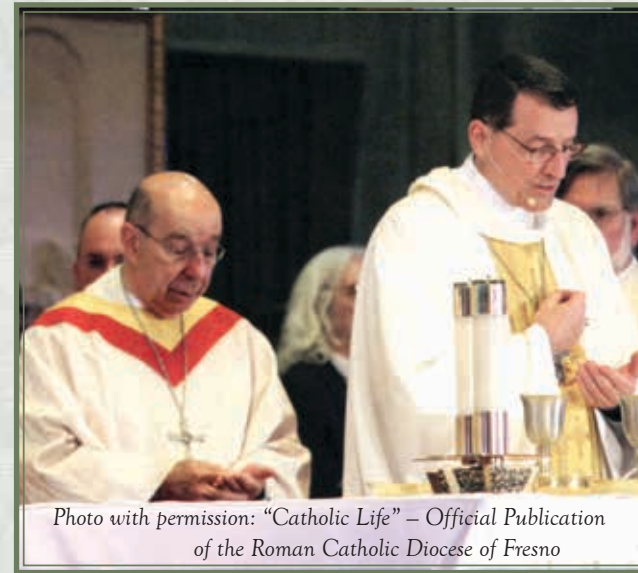


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Installation Mass of Bishop Brennan – May 2, 2019

*The Mother of the Redeemer*

OUR BELOVED MOTHER & MODEL OF FAITH

Mary, the woman destined to be the Mother of God from all  
eternity, who now reigns with her Son, has a very integral part in the  
history of salvation, and in the personal history of every soul.

Mary is inseparably linked with Christ. She is the Woman of  
Genesis, of the Incarnation and of Revelation.

*“In the salvific design of the Most Holy Trinity, the mystery of the  
Incarnation constitutes the superabundant fulfillment of the promise made  
by God to man after the original sin (cf. Genesis 3:15). And so, there comes  
into the world a Son, ‘the seed of the woman,’ who will crush the evil of sin in  
its very origins. The victory of the woman’s Son will not take place without a  
hard struggle, a struggle that is to extend through the whole of human history.  
The ‘eminity’ foretold at the beginning is confirmed in the Apocalypse, in  
which there recurs the sign of the ‘woman,’ this time ‘clothed with the sun’  
(Revelation 12:1).” (Redemptoris Mater, Pope St. John Paul II, 1987)*

Thus we find her present in all stages of salvation history, never  
shrinking from the fierce struggle, but standing as a model of faith,  
who “loyally persevered in her union with her Son unto the cross.” (RM)

If she has been woven so deeply into the mystery of Christ, then it  
must stand true that “knowledge of the true Catholic doctrine regarding  
the Blessed Virgin Mary will always be a key to the exact understanding of  
the mystery of Christ and of the Church (Pope St. Paul VI).” (RM)

And so the Church, and every soul, “journeys through time to meet the  
Lord who comes. But on this journey she proceeds along the path already  
trodden by the Virgin Mary,” who “helps all her children, wherever they may  
be and in whatever condition, to find in Christ  
the path to the Father’s house.” (RM)



*“Assist your people who have fallen,  
yet strive to rise again...”*

— Alma Redemptoris Mater, Ancient Hymn to Our Lady



“WHOEVER REMAINS IN ME  
AND I IN HIM,  
WILL BEAR MUCH FRUIT,  
*because without Me,  
you can do nothing.*”

— John 15:5

Dear Confreres, Family and Friends of the Bethlehem Priory,  
*Laudetur Jesus Christus!* Jesus Christ, the Lord and King of  
the Universe crowned His Mother as Queen of Heaven and  
earth, and “*the angels rejoiced to see their queen, the apostles  
rejoiced to see their Lady, and both obeyed her with loving devotion*”  
(St. Amadeus of Lausanne).  
With the angels we, too, rejoice to see her as our Queen, with  
the apostles we rejoice to see her as Our Lady, and with them  
both we strive to obey her, our spiritual mother, as she asks:  
“*Do whatever He tells you*” (John 2:5).  
And as daughters of St. Norbert, Apostle of the Eucharist,  
our hearts immediately turn to  
the Lord’s command at the Last Supper:  
“*Do this in memory of Me*” (Luke 22:19).  
Drawing near to the Eucharistic Sacrifice of the Mass in the  
company of Mary, *Virgo fidelis*, we ask Her Son to increase  
and deepen our faith through this most holy and divine  
Sacrament. We ask Mary, by her example and prayers, to  
show us how to adore, worship, and love Her Son Jesus with  
pure and undivided hearts. For there, in our hearts,  
she reigns as our Queen, Our Lady, and our Mother.  
Prayerfully in Our Lord and Our Lady,  
*Mother Mary Augustine O. Praem.*  
Mother Mary Augustine, O. Praem., Prioress  
& the Norbertine Canonesses of the  
Bethlehem Priory of St. Joseph



OUR COMMUNITY — SPRING 2019

Top of Page: From our Photo Archives, Spring 1999, Mother and our  
four founding sisters recreate during their novitiate at the Dominican  
Nuns’ Monastery of Our Lady of the Rosary, Buffalo, NY.



# Do This in Memory of Me

## — THE HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS —

### *The Mystical Adventure of the Mass*

Our very special thanks to Rev. Stephen Morrison, O.Praem. (pictured opposite page, bottom), our confrere from Chelmsford, England, who gave our annual retreat this year: "Mystical Adventure of the Mass." The reflections on these two pages were inspired by Father's conferences, sharing how we can learn many principles of the spiritual life from the Mass, thus making the "Mass our life, and our life a veritable Mass."

"At the Last Supper, on the night He was betrayed, our Savior instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice of His Body and Blood. This He did in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the Cross throughout the ages until He should come again, and so entrust to His beloved Spouse, the Church, a memorial of His death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a Paschal banquet in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us." (Sacrosanctum concilium, 1963)

Ever since that beautiful and ineffable night in which God became Bread to feed the weary souls of men, the Church has never ceased to follow His command, "Do this in memory of Me" (Luke 22:19), in a manner substantially unchanged for over two thousand years. Through the Mass, we come into direct contact with Jesus Christ, our Savior, really and truly present, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity in the Eucharist, as we celebrate the redemption that He has won for us at so great a price.

We now approach the solemn second part of the Mass, the *Liturgy of the Eucharist*.

The prayers intensify and we are exhorted to lift up our hearts: "Sursum Corda!" as the priest, with the court of Heaven, offer praise and thanksgiving to God, the Almighty Father. The cantresses intone the song of the angels, "Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus," which the whole choir takes up – the choir on earth and in heaven, echoing the cry of the Prophets of old as they beheld the great glory of God. And not just "of old." Time and space are obsolete: we stand before the throne of God.

At this most sacred moment, all the people kneel. The priest alone speaks the words of the *Eucharistic Prayer*, leading up to the narrative of the Institution of the Eucharist, where he, in the Person of Christ, pronounces Christ's own words, "This is my body, which will be given up for you." He elevates the Host, which moments before had been a piece of bread, but now, through the power and working of the Holy Spirit, at the words of Christ's minister, has been transubstantiated into the Body of Jesus Christ. The Priest pronounces the words of consecration over the chalice of wine, which becomes Christ's most Precious Blood. We too, though silently, participate in a profound and real way in this most sacred sacrifice, as we offer ourselves totally, soul and body, spiritually and physically, with Christ to the Father.

The *Eucharistic Prayer* is followed by the "Our Father" and other prayers which prepare for *Holy Communion*, when we are united with Christ and one another by the reception of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Jesus. This is a moment of profound Love. God not only descended to become man at the Incarnation, but has descended even further: He has become Food for our souls, so that He can be united to us even while we are still on earth, fulfilling His promise to remain with us always.

While God is still so near to us, the Mass is concluded and we are dismissed. But the *Dismissal* is more than an indication that all is over and we are free to return to our daily occupations. The *Dismissal* is The *Sending*: "As the Father has sent Me, so I send you..." (John 17:18, 20:21) We have united ourselves in a very real way to Christ in His sacrifice, and now, after time spent in private thanksgiving to our Divine Guest, we continue His mission by *being Him* in the world. After the Mass, our lives are not the same, for Christ has personally touched our souls and has spoken to our hearts:

*"Do This in Memory of Me."*

### AS CELEBRATED AT THE BETHLEHEM PRIORY

Here at the Bethlehem Priory, the Mass is the center of our day, from and toward which all of our other hours of prayer and work flow. As Norbertine canonesses, particularly set apart by the Church for the praise and worship of God through the Sacred Liturgy together in choir, we daily celebrate the Eucharistic mystery with as much reverence and solemnity as possible, chanting all according to the ancient Gregorian chants of the Praemonstratensian Order.

The Mass at our Priory begins with the chanting of the *Introuit* as the priest, acting in the Person of Jesus Christ, the Eternal High Priest, enters the choir. The sisters' chant rises up as the priest incenses the altar upon which the sacrifice will soon take place.

Acknowledging our sinfulness and unworthiness to take part in these mysteries in the *Confiteor*, we then pray for mercy in the ancient Greek: "Kyrie Eleison; Christe Eleison." These chants are solemn but peaceful, for we know that God is Love, and forgives and heals the contrite heart, preparing us to worthily approach the sacred banquet.

The *Liturgy of the Word* follows, interspersed with chant. The Word of God is proclaimed in readings from the Old and New Testaments, and further explained in the homily.



Photo Credit: Margaret Scot

Photo Credit: Margaret Scot

# Confronting the Crisis

THE FAITH THAT CONQUERS THE WORLD

Photo: Before processing into the chapel for the Pentecost Vigil Mass, the nuns line up at "statio" with lit candles.

"The world is in flames: do you wish to put them out?"  
— St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, Edith Stein

It is painfully clear that our world is in the midst of a grave crisis. Yet, all that we see and hear around us is but a symptom of a much deeper crisis, one that lies at the heart of the problems in the Church, the world, and the hearts of men: *a crisis of faith*. Exposing the cause at the same time reveals the solution, the one and only answer to every crisis in every age: faith in Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Without this faith, the darkness of our era seems impenetrable — so many souls heedlessly journeying down paths that lead to sin and despair. With faith, one has a beacon to guide in this darkness and the consoling conviction that God's truth and love will ultimately triumph over the confusion of our times. With faith, one knows that *all things will finally work for the good of those who love God*. (Cf. Romans 8:28)

However, each of us must be part of the solution. We cannot stand idly by, for Christ is calling all of us to become saints, and, as members of His Body, to fulfill our duty and responsibility in assisting His plan of salvation for mankind. Those of us who have received the grace to believe in Christ and His Church, must commit anew to live our faith more fully and with greater vigor. "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief. Increase my faith." (Mark 9:23)

In this spiritual battle, moreover, Our Lord has not left us orphans. Indeed, in his goodness, He has provided us the perfect guide in one who is both the ideal model and mother of our faith — the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Mary is the perfect model of faith. "By her complete adherence to the Father's will, to his Son's redemptive work, and to every prompting of the Holy Spirit, the Virgin Mary is the Church's model of faith and charity" (Catechism of the Catholic Church 967). By her faith and love, Mary recognized the spiritual realities underlying both the most common and the most extraordinary events of her life, and at each moment offered a total "fiat" to God. Even in the darkest time that the world has ever faced — the Crucifixion and Death of God Himself, her most beloved Son — Mary adhered fully to the Divine Will. She is thus the perfect model to us as we strive to navigate in faith the tumultuous seas of this world.

Further, Mary is not simply the model of faith, but in a real sense, she is the *mother of our faith*. Having been assumed into Heaven and crowned Queen of all creation, Our Lady now enjoys the clear and perfect vision of God and no longer walks by the obscurity of faith. However, she remains close to each of her children here on earth, interceding for us with her Son that we too might receive the supernatural faith and charity necessary to correspond fully to God's will in love even amidst darkness and difficulties.

The world may be in flames, but they can be put out, for God has promised His victory to those who have faith.

"Do whatever He tells you." (John 2:5)

Let us go forward in confidence, entrusting all to Jesus through Mary, doing our part as He asks, so that God's holy will may be accomplished in all.

"AND THE VICTORY THAT CONQUERS THE WORLD IS OUR FAITH.

Who is conqueror of the world?

He who believes that Jesus is the Son of God."

— 1 John 5:5

## — OUR HORARIUM —

(Please call for our Friday and Sunday schedules.)

- Midnight Vigils – Office of Readings (Matins)
- 6:00 am Morning prayer (Lauds) & Angelus
- 6:35 am Chapter (Martyrology & the Rule)
- 7:15 am Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament & Mid-morning prayer (Terce)
- 8:15 am Benediction
- 8:30 am The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass
- 10:00 am Work, Class, or Study
- 11:40 am Mid-day prayer (Sext), Angelus & Rosary
- 12:20 pm Dinner
- 1:05 pm Mid-afternoon prayer (None)
- 1:30 pm Grand Silence - prayer, rest, exercise, etc
- 2:30 pm Work, Class, or Study
- 5:10 pm Evening prayer (Vespers) & Angelus
- 5:40 pm Lectio Divina
- 6:25 pm Supper, followed by Recreation
- 8:00 pm Night prayer (Compline)
- 9:00 pm "Lights Out"



## Monastery Expansion and Our Current Needs

### DEO GRATIAS! LAND LOAN PAID IN FULL

We give thanks to God and to all of you who have helped us over these past four years with donation toward making payments on the loan for the 470+ acres of land on which our monastery is built. In God's mercy, the final check

was written this past June 2019. May God reward all of you who have assisted in enabling us to live our cloistered contemplative life in this setting, rich in God's beauty, and in silence and solitude, so conducive to our vocation.



### OTHER PRESSING NEEDS

We humbly invite you to consider helping with Phase II of our Monastery Expansion Project and other pressing needs:

**COMMUNITY LIVING EXPENSES:** Not unlike a large family, our community's household, kitchen, dairy kitchen, farm/animal, garden, vehicle, maintenance, utilities, office, clothing, medical, insurance, and other needs are significant. Your support is deeply appreciated, whether by check or cash, online credit card donations via PayPal ([www.norbertinesisters.com/donate/](http://www.norbertinesisters.com/donate/)), or donations which we can arrange in-house for you. Please call (661-823-1066) or email us if you have questions ([norbertinecanonesses@gmail.com](mailto:norbertinecanonesses@gmail.com)).

**PHASE II OF OUR MONASTERY EXPANSION PROJECT:** We remain deeply grateful to all of you who are helping to build our future chapel, which will replace our current chapel, still housed in the twice-expanded converted game room and living room of the property's original 70-year-old ranch home. The estimated cost of Phase II's chapel and wing construction is \$12 million, with \$8 million required to take the next step of commissioning a complete architectural design and blueprints. We continue to place all in God's loving providence, trusting that He is blessing all of our benefactors and will raise up our chapel in His perfect timing and according to His good pleasure.

Conceptual Drawing of our Future Chapel  
By Mark Russell, A.I.A., Radian Design Group, Inc.



THE NORBERTINE CANONESSES  
 OF THE BETHLEHEM PRIORY OF ST. JOSEPH  
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— *A Special Thank You* —

To our friends at Berchtold  
 Equipment for lending us the  
 machinery needed to complete a  
 large retaining wall project on  
 our monastery property.  
 God bless you!

*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

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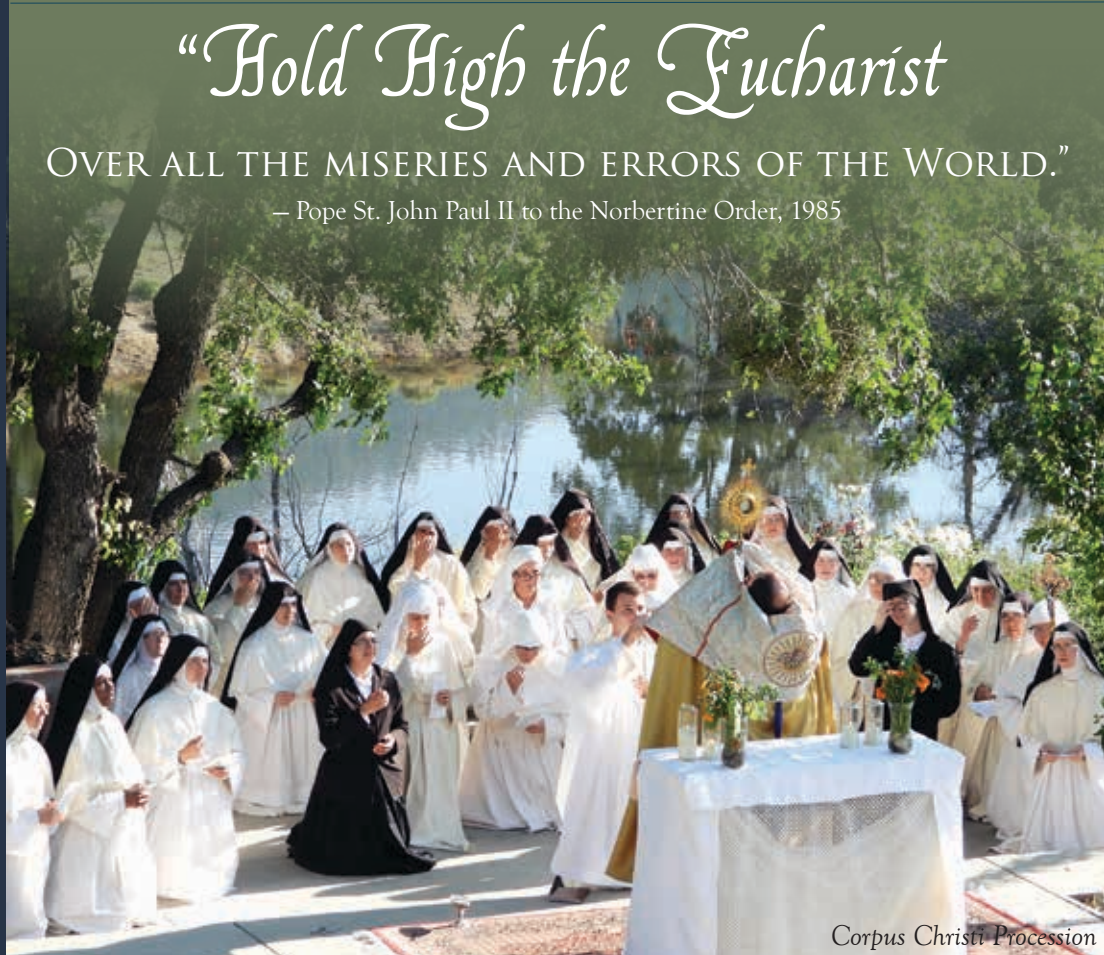
♣ WE ARE HERE TO OFFER PRAYERS  
 FOR YOU AND YOUR INTENTIONS:  
 You are welcome to call us:  
 (661) 823-1066 – or –  
 email us: pray\_req@cybersurfers.net or  
 MotherMaryA@aol.com

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

*“Hold High the Eucharist*

*OVER ALL THE MISERIES AND ERRORS OF THE WORLD.”*

— Pope St. John Paul II to the Norbertine Order, 1985



*Corpus Christi Procession*

Art on the Cover: *Coronation of the Virgin*, by Gentile da Fabriano, c. 1420

Art at the Center: *The Last Supper*, by Jean Baptiste de Champaigne, 1678