

The Norbertine Canonesses of

the Bethlehem Priory of St. Joseph

FIRST

FRUITS

Solemnity of St. Joseph, March 19 and Lenten Season, 2021 / Issue 52



"The Light that shines in the darkness..."

— John 1:5

YEAR OF ST. JOSEPH & YEAR OF THE FAMILY
900TH JUBILEE YEAR OF THE NORBERTINE ORDER — 1121-2021

“IN YOU IS *the source of Life,*
AND IN *your Light*
WE SEE *Light.*”
— Psalm 36:10



Dear Confreres, Family and Friends of the Bethlehem Priory,

Laudetur Jesus Christus!

As we continue our Lenten pilgrimage in this Year of St. Joseph and the 900th Jubilee Year of our Order, our eyes remain fixed ever on Christ, the Light that shines in the darkness, and Whom the darkness can never overcome (John 1:5). And with our eyes fixed on Him, as we are drawn closer to Him, and learn to “*live, and move, and have our being*” in Him (Acts 17:28), we are drawn closer to one another, and the whole human family is drawn into deeper unity, founded upon Him Who created all men out of gratuitous love.

During this time of challenges and uncertainty, we give thanks to God for the gift of our faith, trusting firmly in Jesus Christ, Our Lord and Savior, the Light of the World, our Rock who is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8).

While we journey with Jesus and Mary toward Calvary this Lent, we carry all of you in our hearts, lifting you and your needs, sufferings and joys up to the Lord, sharing in the spirit of St. Joseph, foster father of the Lord and husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a spirit always open to God’s will and loving providence, knowing that His ways and thoughts, which are so far above ours (Isaiah 55), are always the most perfect.

Prayerfully in Our Lord, Our Lady, St. Joseph and St. Norbert,

Mother Mary Augustine O. Praem.

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

On the Cover: The Heavenly and Earthly Trinities, (c. 1682) by Bartolomé Esteban Murillo

ANNOUNCING WITH JOY *The Year of the Family — The Year of St. Joseph* — 900th Jubilee Year of Our Order —

“The Son of the Almighty
came into our world

in a state of great vulnerability.

He needed to be defended, protected,
cared for and raised by Joseph.

Saint Joseph could not be other
than the Guardian of the Church,
for the Church is the continuation
of the Body of Christ in history...

In his continued protection
of the Church, Joseph continues
to protect the child and his mother,
and we too, by our love for the Church,
continue to love the child and his mother.”

— Pope Francis,
Patris Corde, December 8th, 2020



INDULGENCES FOR THE

Year of St. Joseph

There are fifteen ways to receive an
indulgence in the Year of St. Joseph,
including the following:

- Reciting the Litany of St. Joseph for persecuted Christians (see p. 3).
- Entrusting one’s daily work and activity to the protection of St. Joseph the Worker.
- Praying the Rosary together with one’s family in order that “all Christian families may be stimulated to recreate the same atmosphere of intimate communion, love and prayer that was in the Holy Family.”



The Holy Family

— ICON OF THE TRINITY —

The three Persons of the Blessed Trinity — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — live in a ceaseless exchange of mutual love: each Divine Person exists wholly for the Others in complete self-offering and perfect union.

Every human community is called to be a reflection of this beautiful Community of Persons within God Himself. Every human community is called to engage in a mutual exchange of generous and self-sacrificing love.

When He emptied Himself to become man, Jesus, God the Son, Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, taught us how to do this, for by virtue of His divinity united with his humanity, His divine activity within the Trinity carries over into His human life as son of Mary and Joseph. He, the God-Man, makes the same complete gift of self in His human family as He makes within the everlasting Godhead. Jesus Christ thus connects two “trinities”: that of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and that of Joseph, Mary and Jesus. What the Holy Trinity is in eternity, The Holy Family of Nazareth is on earth and in time, being the model and exemplar for every human family and community.

This communion of love is seen on earth by our mutual charity, expressed through service and mercy, such that all are joyfully at one another’s disposal. Each member of the family fulfills his distinct role for the common good, while supporting and appreciating the roles of others.

The religious community seeks to incarnate this familial and Trinitarian reality. As in a family, we do not gather merely to accomplish some work, but, as our Rule of St. Augustine states, “*the chief motivation for your sharing life together is to live harmoniously in the house and to have one heart and one soul seeking God.*” By performing and accepting service, offering and receiving mercy, we participate in the generous and self-giving union that God is in Himself, and through our participation can aid our Lord in His mission in the Incarnation — for when we imitate the everflowing love which is in the Blessed Trinity, that same love overflows our communities and cascades upon all humankind, drawing them into the Trinity’s embrace.



A recreational walk

— 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”



Chanting the Litany of St. Joseph
on his Solemnity, March 19th



St. Joseph

— THE LITANY OF ST. JOSEPH —

Lord, have mercy.
Christ have mercy.
Lord have mercy. Christ hear us.
Christ graciously hear us.
God, the Father of heaven,
have mercy on us.
God, the Son, Redeemer of the world,
have mercy on us.
God, the Holy Spirit,
have mercy on us.

Holy Mary, *pray for us*
St. Joseph, **pray for us*
Illustrious son of David,
Light of Patriarchs,
Spouse of the Mother of God,
Chaste Guardian of the Virgin,
Foster-Father of the Son of God,
Diligent Protector of Christ,
Head of the Holy Family,
Joseph most just,
Joseph most chaste,
Joseph most prudent,
Joseph most strong,
Joseph most obedient,
Joseph most faithful,
Mirror of patience,
Lover of poverty,

Model of workers,
Glory of family life,
Guardian of virgins,
Pillar of families,
Solace of the afflicted,
Hope of the sick,
Patron of the dying,
Terror of demons,
Protector of Holy Church.

Lamb of God, Who take away the sins
of the world, *spare us* O Lord.
Lamb of God, Who take away the sins
of the world, *graciously hear us* O Lord.
Lamb of God, Who take away the sins
of the world, *have mercy on us*.

He made him lord of His house.
And ruler of all His possessions.

Let us pray. O God, in your ineffable
providence You were pleased to
choose Blessed Joseph to be the
spouse of Your most holy Mother;
grant, we beg You, that we may be
worthy to have him for our intercessor
in heaven whom on earth we venerate
as our Protector: You who live and
reign forever and ever. Amen.

Devoted to St. Joseph from our beginnings, we remember him in various ways, particularly on Wednesdays (the day of the week traditionally dedicated to him), such as: reciting his litany before Compline, offering a special dedication prayer after our community Rosary, and often celebrating a votive Mass of St. Joseph.

St. Norbert

As a young man, St. Norbert seemed an unlikely candidate for sanctity, and even less as one to be numbered among the great penitents. For years he lived a worldly life in ease and dissipation, until struck from his horse by lightning. He then turned totally to God, and knew that a great divesting of all that was not God or for God must ensue. St. Norbert then, with as much enthusiasm and charm as he had formerly devoted to his worldly life, converted fully to God in prayer, fasting and voluntary poverty – or as he put it, to “*following the Sacred Scriptures and Christ as Leader*.” St. Norbert knew that the authenticity of his love for God was strengthened and furthered only by this total self-renunciation.

The word “penance” sometimes evokes negative emotions, as the would-be penitent focuses on the goods that are to be given up or denied. Yet St. Norbert teaches us that true penance is always motivated by true love, which seeks union with the beloved. To be united with God, St. Norbert knew that he had to leave behind “*the dryness of wordly heat*.” Moreover, his biographer tells us that “*the fire of divine love which had been ignited gradually expanded*,” fanned and fed by his continual acts of penance.

When he had established his new community, Norbert directed his his

first followers at Prémontré in this way of love, exhorting them “*not about the earth but, in thought and speech, he flew to rest and made his hearers take flight*.” The early Norbertines were so caught up in their flight toward God that it was said of them that “*Norbert’s followers had scarcely any care or concern for corporal things. Rather they focused all their effort of spiritual things*.” They were in love with God and sought Him alone.

Today, 900 years later, we hear the same Divine call to prayer and penance: not only as a discipline in this time of Lent, but also as essential to the true path of Christian discipleship. As a model of true penance, with Scripture and Christ as his Leader, St. Norbert shows us how to turn our whole life over to God as we strive to “*love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength*,” knowing that if we do so, He will unite us with Himself even on this earth, that our lives may bring His light to the whole world. We can join those early Norbertines who, “*after leaving everything, as if giving a kiss, take their position in the line of battle. The trumpet sounds from sea to sea and their voice is heard in which both the works of God are made manifest and ‘are sought in all His desires’*”. Thanks be to Him Who does not desert those who trust in Him.”

(Quotations taken from the Vita Norberti B, the ancient life of our founder. Please see the insert in this newsletter for more information.)

MIRROR OF TRUE PENANCE



“How many are
PRAYING,
MAKING SACRIFICES
AND INTERCEDING
for the good of all...

Each of us can discover in
— Joseph —
the man who
goes unnoticed,
a daily, discreet
and hidden presence –
AN INTERCESSOR,
A SUPPORT
AND A GUIDE
in times of trouble.

— Saint Joseph —
reminds us
that those who appear
HIDDEN
OR IN THE SHADOWS
can play
an incomparable role
in the
history of salvation.”

Events at the Bethlehem Priory of St. Joseph

✦ IN NOVEMBER

- 1) Approaching the Presidential Election on the 3rd, we added more hours of Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament to our schedule, and we have continued with extra time in prayer for our country during these following months.
- 2) In union with all Americans, we gave thanks to God on Thanksgiving Day, for the many graces and gifts He has bestowed upon our land.
- 3) Some of our Labradors gave birth, and we had the joy of welcoming puppies once again.
- 4) Rev. Stephen Boyle, O.Praem, lights our Advent wreath on the First Sunday of Advent, which marked the beginning of the 900th Jubilee Year of our Order, a graced opportunity for fostering *communio* among Norbertine canonries worldwide.

✦ IN DECEMBER

- 5) While taking a sabbatical from our Christmas wreath fundraiser, we gratefully received many orders for our Christmas “baked treat” gift boxes as well as items from our online monastery gift shop.
- 6) Supported by the assistance of generous friends and benefactors, we were blessed to publish a 900th Jubilee Edition of “Vita Norberti B,” the ancient account of “The Life of Saint Norbert,” released just as our Jubilee Year began (see opposite page).
- 7) On the 25th, we joined all Christians in the celebration of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

✦ IN JANUARY

- 8) On the 6th, Solemnity of the Epiphany, Rev. Anselm Ramelow, O.P., here on a private retreat, presided at the annual blessing of our convent.
- 9) Rev. John Corbett, O.P., offered our annual retreat from the 19th–23rd, with beautiful and inspiring reflections on the Gospel of St. John.

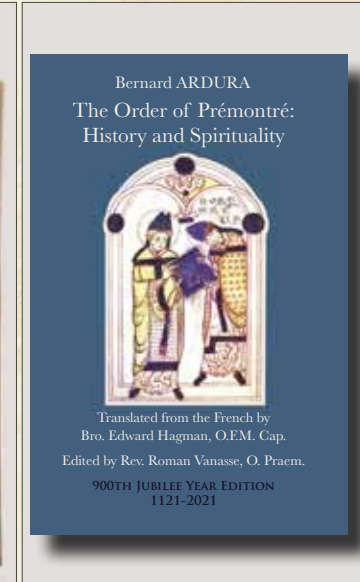
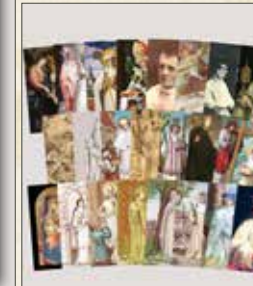
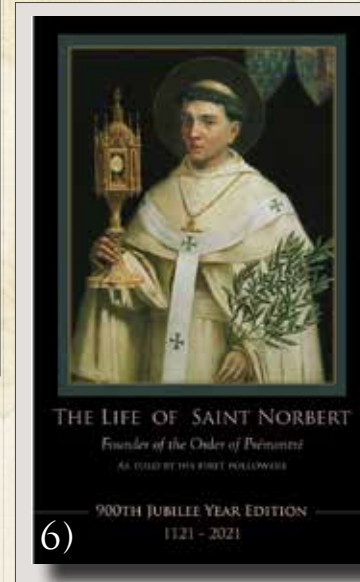
✦ IN FEBRUARY

- 10) At the conclusion of the Christmas Season, several of our sisters gave a classical music concert to the community.
- 11) From the 7th–14th, Dr. David Fagerberg of Notre Dame University offered classes on “Liturgical Asceticism,” a theme connecting deeply with our Norbertine way of life.
- 12) The 17th marked Ash Wednesday and the solemn beginning of the great Lenten Season.



Celebrating the 900th Anniversary of the Norbertine Order

— COMMEMORATIVE ITEMS AVAILABLE IN OUR GIFT SHOP —



- ✦ The Life of Saint Norbert*
A hardcover book with a modern English translation of the ancient “Vita Norberti B” of our Founder
- ✦ Specialty Rosaries ~
featuring images of St. Norbert and Norbertine characteristics
- ✦ Set of 23 Holy Cards ~
of Norbertine Saints, Blesseds, and Holy Persons
- ✦ Hand-Painted Candle ~
depicting an image of St. Norbert, 100% beeswax
- ✦ The Order of Premontre*
A reprint of this beloved Norbertine classic
(*see book flyer insert)

www.shop.norbertinesisters.org

Monastery Expansion & Our Current Needs

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

COMMUNITY LIVING EXPENSES:

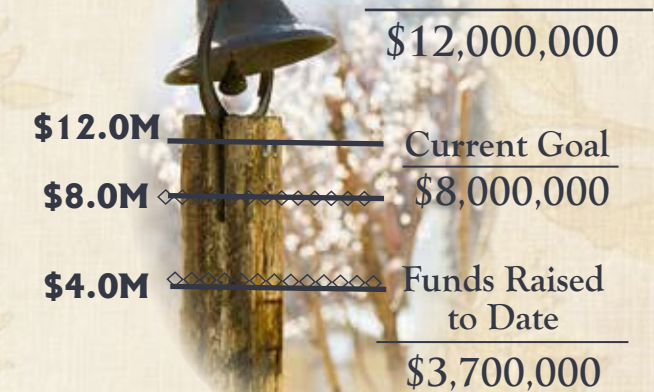
Not unlike a large family, our community’s household, kitchen, dairy kitchen, farm/animal, garden, vehicle, maintenance, utilities, office, clothing, medical, insurance, and other needs are significant. Your support is deeply appreciated, whether by check or cash, online credit card donations via PayPal (www.norbertinesisters.com/donate/), 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).

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. With over \$3.7 million raised to date, thanks to the continuing generosity of our dear friends like you, we continue to place all in God’s loving providence, trusting that He is blessing all of you, and will raise up our chapel in His perfect timing and according to His holy will.

www.norbertinesisters.org

Monies Needed FOR PHASE II: CHAPEL & WING



R. Belcher



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
17831 Water Canyon Road ♣ Tehachapi, California 93561-7686 USA

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— A Special Thank You —

To our generous friends who donated to us a new John Deere utility cart, an invaluable help on our monastery property to assist with our milking duties, garden work, animal tasks, and other projects.

May God bless you abundantly!

Norbertine Canonesses

— WEBSITE —

- ♣ Online Monastery Gift Shop
- ♣ Photo Gallery
- ♣ Horarium in Photos
- ♣ Information on our Holy Founder, St. Norbert

www.norbertinesisters.org

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

- ♣ FOR ONLINE GIFT SHOP PURCHASES:
Please visit our website at
www.shop.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 or
norbertinecanonesses@gmail.com

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



“ST. NORBERT HOOKED THE ANCHOR OF HOPE TO HIS UNSHAKEN FAITH,

He had come to die to the world and live for Christ.

He announced that they truly live who live not for themselves, but they in whom

THE POOR CHRIST LIVES.”

— Vita Norberti B