

Abbey

magazine



Mercy Works

A Fresh Start

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My Name is Mercy

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“BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL,
FOR THEY WILL BE SHOWN MERCY.”
—MATTHEW 5:7

From the Abbot

“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 ultimate and supreme act by which God comes to meet us. Mercy: the fundamental law that dwells in the heart of every person... . Mercy: the bridge that connects God and man, opening our hearts to the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness.”

—*Misericordiae Vultus*, Pope Francis

Very early in his letter establishing the Year of Mercy, Pope Francis compassionately and earnestly challenges all people to step back, reflect, and find ways to live as a person who both shares and receives mercy. The gracious exchange of this virtue is meant to be shared with all people, and as a positive ripple, to change significantly the world in which we live.

I had the great privilege of enjoying a three-month sabbatical this past fall. I retreated to the beautiful northern woods of Wisconsin along with some 40 books to read. It was a time for reading, praying, walking, and engaging in some important conversations. And it was in some ways an escape from the world. I had come to believe that we live in a very inhospitable world. We are so quick to replace the ordinary pleasantries in relationships with quick judgments and ire. Patient compassion with and for each other is an endangered

way of interaction. We are encouraged to build walls constructed of distrust, racial hatred, fear of foreigners, intolerance for those who don't think like us, and ugly politics. Wars and terrorism dot the globe. Where is our compassion, our dialogue? What would Jesus do?

Pope Francis pulls no punches as he challenges us to open our hearts to those living on the outermost fringes of society—fringes which modern society itself creates.

“How many uncertain and painful situations there are in the world today! How many are the wounds borne by the flesh of those who have no voice because their cry is muffled and drowned out by the indifference of the rich! ... Let us ward off destructive cynicism! Let us open our eyes and see the misery of the world, the wounds of our brothers and sisters who are denied their dignity, and let us recognize that we are compelled to heed their cry for help! May we reach out to them and support them so they can feel the warmth of our presence, our friendship, and our fraternity! May their cry become our own, and together may we break down the barriers of indifference that too often reign supreme and mask our hypocrisy and egoism!”

—*Misericordiae Vultus*, Pope Francis

Gary Neville, O.Praem.



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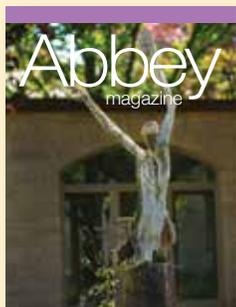
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With arms raised heavenward, the resurrected Christ ascends to the Father leaving behind the commission to His followers to, "go and make disciples of all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." For nearly 900 years the Norbertines have striven to fulfill this command.

Driftwood sculpture by
Fr. Larry Mayer, O. Praem.



The Holy Door of Mercy at the Shrine of St. Joseph located within Old St. Joseph Church on the St. Norbert College campus in De Pere, Wisconsin.

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How Do You Imagine God? ¿Cómo te Imaginas a Dios?

By Fr. John Bostwick, O. Praem. Translated by Sr. Guadalupe Muñoz
Por Padre John Bostwick, O. Praem. Traducido por Sr. Guadalupe Muñoz

The philosopher Feuerbach—no friend of Christianity—asserted that while the Bible tells us God created man in his own image, the fact is man creates God in his image. Sometimes it seems he has a point.

In his announcement of a Jubilee Year of Mercy, Pope Francis is not offering a new image of God, but is highlighting God's core identity as unconditional love and unbounded mercy. The jubilee is a time of celebration and freedom: debts are forgiven; slaves are freed; old wrongs are set aside. It is a time for healing and wholeness. God's unfailing mercy is manifest in the open door; the path to reconciliation and healing is made more accessible for even the most serious sins. We explore ways of welcoming the divorced and remarried to Holy Communion and including others often seen as outsiders.

And while this good news is encouraging and welcome to most, some folks are troubled by what they see as a watering down of Christian ideals. Love and mercy are just fine, but there must be repentance first. People want to project onto God our human approach to reconciliation; that is, "If you say you're sorry, then I'll forgive you," because they don't see that God's justice is mercy.

Blessed Julian of Norwich famously observed that our image of God's wrath is a projection onto God of how we humans would respond. We are creating God in our image without understanding God's love transcends our human biases.

The reality is that the initiative belongs to God. His Word to us is mercy—unconditional love—and our most appropriate response to that divine gift is repentance, praise, and thanksgiving for what God has done and continues to do for us.

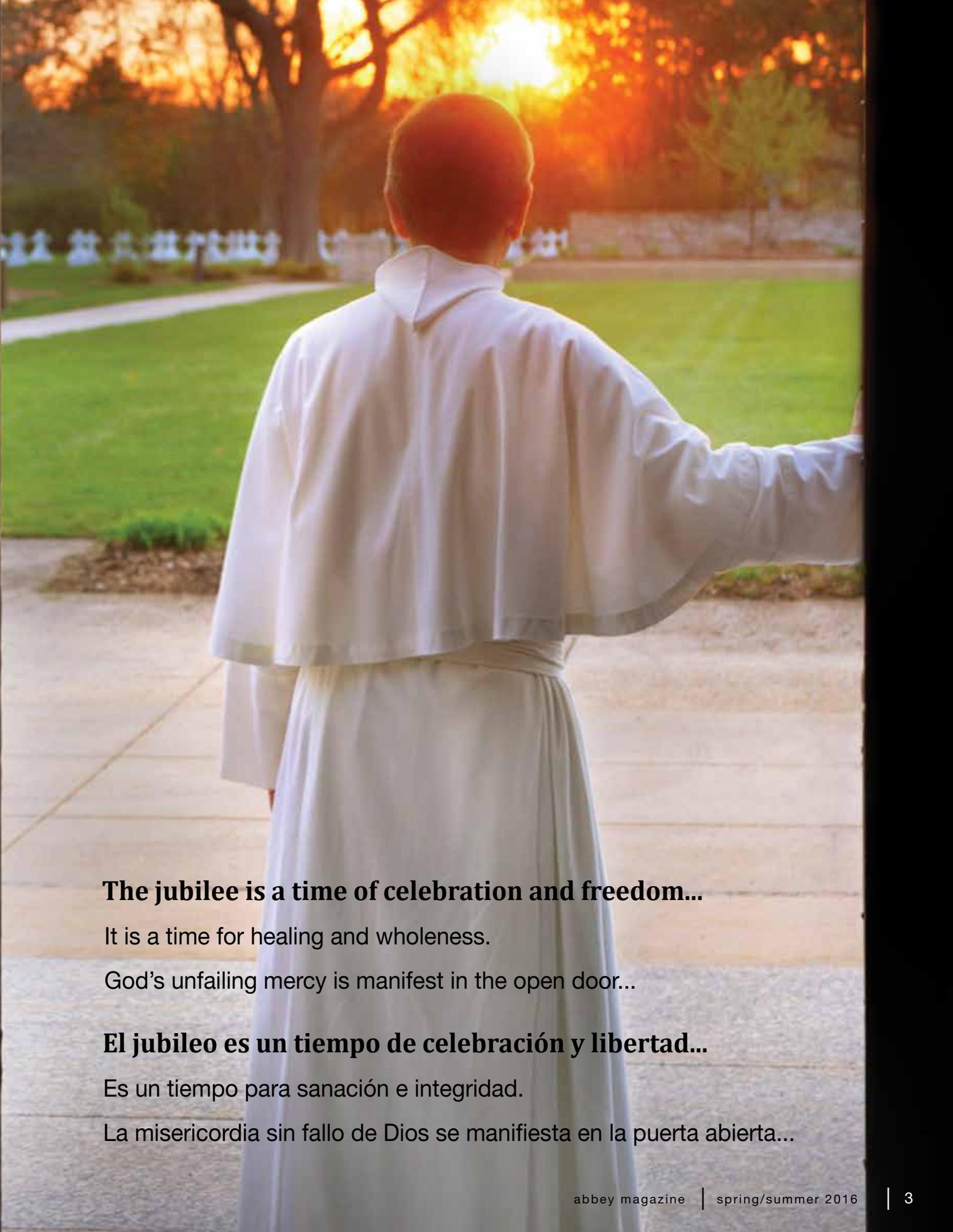
El filósofo Feuerbach—no amigo de la Cristiandad—mantenía que aunque la Biblia nos cuenta que Dios creó al ser humano a su propia imagen, de hecho el ser humano crea a Dios en su imagen. A veces parece que él cae en la cuenta.

En su anuncio del Año Jubileo de Misericordia, el Papa Francisco no nos está ofreciendo una imagen nueva de Dios, sino que está haciendo resaltar la identidad central de Dios como amor incondicional y la misericordia sin límites. El jubileo es un tiempo de celebración y libertad: las deudas son perdonadas; los esclavos son liberados; viejos errores están anulados. Es un tiempo para sanación e integridad. La misericordia sin fallo de Dios se manifiesta en la puerta abierta; el camino a la reconciliación y sanación se hace más accesible aún para los pecados más graves. Exploramos maneras de dar la bienvenida a los divorciados y re-casados para la Santa Comunión y de incluir a otros que frecuentemente se ven como extraños.

Y aunque esta buena nueva es animadora y bienvenida para la mayoría, algunos están perturbados por lo que ven como un aguar de los ideales Cristianos. El amor y la misericordia son buenos, pero debe haber arrepentimiento primero. Personas quieren proyectar sobre Dios nuestra perspectiva sobre la reconciliación; es decir, "Si dices que estás arrepentido, entonces te perdonaré," porque no ven que la justicia de Dios es misericordia.

La bendita Julián de Norwich famosamente observaba que nuestra imagen de la ira de Dios es una proyección sobre Dios de como nosotros los humanos responderíamos. Estamos creando a Dios en nuestra imagen sin comprender que el amor de Dios trasciende nuestros prejuicios humanos.

La realidad es que la iniciativa pertenece a Dios. Su Palabra a nosotros es misericordia—amor incondicional—y nuestra respuesta más apropiada a ese don divino es arrepentimiento, alabanza, y acción de gracias por lo que Dios nos ha hecho y sigue haciendo para nosotros.



The jubilee is a time of celebration and freedom...

It is a time for healing and wholeness.

God's unfailing mercy is manifest in the open door...

El jubileo es un tiempo de celebración y libertad...

Es un tiempo para sanación e integridad.

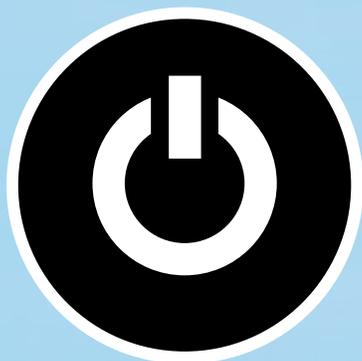
La misericordia sin fallo de Dios se manifiesta en la puerta abierta...



Experience a Fresh Start

for Christians, the Church, and the World

By Fr. Tim Shillcox, O. Praem.



It is the easiest way to unfreeze a locked computer or untangle a seemingly hopeless situation—shut down and restart. “Rebooting” is the technical term. This concept of a fresh start is essential to the ancient practice of the jubilee year; and presently, the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy.

The Origins of Jubilee

The origins of jubilee are found in the Old Testament Book of Leviticus, one of the five ancient texts of the Torah, the Pentateuch, dating from 5th to 3rd centuries, BC. Leviticus deals with ritual, legal, and moral practices. Chapter 25 recognizes the very real, human, and moral need for mercy and a fresh start on a regular basis, and declares that this renewal is facilitated by three deliberate actions:

- Take a Sabbath rest, giving a rest to our gripes and complaints against others. Nobody makes good decisions or sees clearly when he or she is tired or exhausted.
- Forgive overwhelming debts, setting the ledger back to zero—a fresh start. If a debt cannot be repaid anyway, why hold onto it and the estrangement it causes?
- Celebrate and go forward together in harmony based on a renewed trust that the Gospel vision is possible.

Since Pope Boniface VIII in 1325, such a jubilee year has been marked in the Roman Catholic Church every 25 years. Our last jubilee was in 2000 as the new millennium dawned; the next was set to occur in 2025 according to the prescribed pattern. However, Pope Francis decided that the world, the Roman Catholic Church, the Christian communion, and the human family could not wait another nine years for the power of divine mercy, so he moved it up to now—to 2016.

Now, with Christian children being beheaded and adults crucified in the Middle East; Now, as radically-inspired violence in God’s Name seems to multiply and soak Mother Earth in innocent blood; Now, as ancient suspicions re-emerge, old prejudices show their force, and fear-fueled polarization grips society; Now, in our families, workplaces, religious houses, and neighborhoods; Now, in our hearts and souls; Now, we need God’s Mercy; Now, we need to be forgiven; Now, we need to be forgiving of others, so that we may start again.

Find Your Holy Door

There are Holy Doors through which to walk, in Rome and in every diocese of the world; local and global pilgrimages to make; indulgences to be gained through the satisfaction of certain set conditions. In some ways, these are only cosmetic observances that may effect very little change. In truth, the Holy Door is the confessional, or the reconciliation room at our parish church, and the Sacrament of Reconciliation. There is found the great amnesty and the “revolution of tenderness” of which Pope Francis speaks, and for which he so deeply yearns.

Pope Francis cites his own conversion long ago, in a Buenos Aires confessional, on the Feast of St. Matthew, the





Works of Mercy Illustrations are from the Ade Bethune Collection, courtesy of Special Collections, St. Catherine University, St. Paul, MN 55106

tax collector, and the great Scripture of that moment: “Go and learn the meaning of the words, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ I did not come to call the righteous but sinners” (Matthew 9:13).

As a Church of sinners-becoming-saints, we are called to confess not only our sins, but also our deepest trust and firm belief that God delights in forgiving us. As Pope Francis says in the title of his new book, *The Name of God Is Mercy*. The jubilee year invites (or even requires us) to go to confession. Any priest will drop what he’s doing to facilitate your experience of God’s healing love. And since we priests must go to confession ourselves, we understand firsthand the nervousness, the unnecessary-but-real embarrassment, the fear and avoidance. We will do our best to make it easy for you—not as judges, but as ministers of God’s mercy. Confess also your trust, your need, and your desire to start again to be forgiven and to become forgiving.

Absolution for (Your) World?

When he was elected three years ago, an American commentator, Michael Leach, proposed to Pope Francis that he celebrate a Worldwide Forgiveness Mass, or general absolution for the world, and a completely fresh start to anyone who would accept it. What an amazing idea—radical, revolutionary, and rooted in Christ. Certainly it would shake up the narrow, legalistic sense of justice and mercy, which so often prevails in institutional religion and frightened or self-righteous hearts.

Perhaps Pope Francis will bestow general absolution for our world, but if not, would it not be within each of us to make such a decision in this jubilee year? Could we declare our own general absolution for all who have hurt or offended us? Could we ask such general absolution of all those whom

we have hurt through human weakness or malice? I have seen it risked by a Norbertine confrere at the millennium; I risked it myself with Norbertine brothers a few years back. In both instances, the results were healing and positive—great risk, great relief, and great blessing.

On November 13, 2015, a terrorist explosion in Paris killed many innocent people, including Helene Leiris, a young wife and mother. Within days, her husband Antoine issued a statement to the terrorists, acknowledging his grief but refusing to give them the victory of his hatred. “I will not

give you the gift of hating you,” he said. He also spoke of their 17-month old son, Melvil, who would continue to eat, nap, and play—to insult those terrorists with his happiness and freedom, since as his father declared, “You don’t have his hatred either!” This is the power of divine mercy, wrought by the shedding of Jesus’ blood for the forgiveness of sins.

Spiritual Works of Mercy:

- Counsel the Doubtful
- Instruct the Ignorant
- Correct Sinners
- Comfort the Sorrowful
- Forgive All Injuries
- Bear Wrongs with Patience
- Pray for the Living and the Dead

Corporal Works of Mercy:

- Feed the Hungry
- Clothe the Naked
- Give Drink to the Thirsty
- Shelter the Homeless
- Care for the Sick
- Visit the Imprisoned
- Bury the Dead

Get to Works

Such amazing victories of mercy can happen in our lives. Perhaps they will be starting points that set us on a renewed and healing course. Or perhaps, they will be the result of the simple, faithful, consistent practice of another form of mercy from deep within the Roman Catholic tradition—the Spiritual and

Corporal Works of Mercy.

Simple, accessible, and necessary mercies are kindnesses and acts of compassion that soften our hearts and create the safe space where trust can be restored, hope rekindled, and those estranged able to walk together again. As divine mercy in this Extraordinary Jubilee Year reboots our gridlocked, jammed-up world, and resets our hearts and homes, then our Norbertine Order, our Church, and our world get a fresh start in the Lord.



Fr. Brendan McKeough, O. Praem., offers Mass at Green Bay's Hispanic parish, St. Willebrord.



Fr. James Neilson, O. Praem., lectures on art for inmates at Green Bay Correctional Institution.



Norbertines in S

Welcoming Immigrants

St. Willebrord Parish in downtown Green Bay is the hub of the area's Hispanic Catholic ministry. A Norbertine parish since 1932, 20 weekly Masses are offered in English, Spanish, or bilingually. "Open Doors, Open Hearts/Puertas Abiertas y Corazones Abiertas" is the parish's invitation to welcome all into God's house and the community. According to **Fr. Brendan McKeough, O. Praem.**, who lived and worked for 13 years in Cuernavaca, Mexico, he enjoys his weekly Mass offering at St. Willy's because "my heart is still in Mexico and with the Mexican people."

Fr. Andy Cribben, O. Praem., is the current pastor who leads the parish of nearly 1,400 families who travel to the church from throughout northeastern Wisconsin. He was appointed pastor in 2011 upon the retirement of **Fr. Ken De Groot, O. Praem.**, who facilitated the establishment of St. Willy's as the first Hispanic ministry in Green Bay in 1989.

Today Fr. De Groot and his former pastoral associate **Sr. Melanie Maczka, SSC**, direct Casa ALBA Melanie, a busy Hispanic community resource center in the heart of Green Bay that addresses immigrant needs for adult education, youth training, parent support, and immigration.

Visiting the Imprisoned

Fr. James Neilson, O. Praem., associate professor of art at St. Norbert College, made a presentation at St. Norbert Abbey two years ago that caught the attention of Bill Matthias, a social worker who volunteers with inmates at Green Bay Correctional Institution. Matthias convinced Fr. Neilson to present his lecture at the 1,250-inmate maximum-security men's prison. The original Wisconsin State Reformatory was built in 1898 on the east bank of the Fox River, the same year **Fr. Bernard Pennings, O. Praem.**, established St. Norbert Priory and St. Norbert College in West



Tony Pichler and Mike Dockry, Norbertine associates (center and right), serve on the ministry team at St. John the Evangelist Homeless Shelter.



Fr. James Baraniak, O. Praem., offers pastoral care to inmates at Green Bay Correctional Institution.

ervice

De Pere, and the two institutions have always been linked through Norbertine ministry to inmates.

“I’m somewhat embarrassed to say this, but it had never crossed my mind to take my art lectures into a prison,” said Fr. Neilson. On his first visit, he delivered a college-level lecture on art as a catalyst for deeper thinking. It just clicked. To my great surprise, the inmates were so receptive and I felt exhilarated. All my worry and apprehension were lifted,” he said.

Fr. Neilson’s coursework in the prison continues today, where he visits four times per semester to share three-hour lectures and discussion with up to 30 participants on the aesthetics, interpretation, and art history. The works presented are specially curated by Fr. Neilson to address issues of race, gender, and faith. “We discuss thoughts of beauty, grace, and re-imagination. The men learn to use new vocabulary to reflect on their own lives and the lives of others. They are seeking clarity, and I help them use art to ask themselves questions

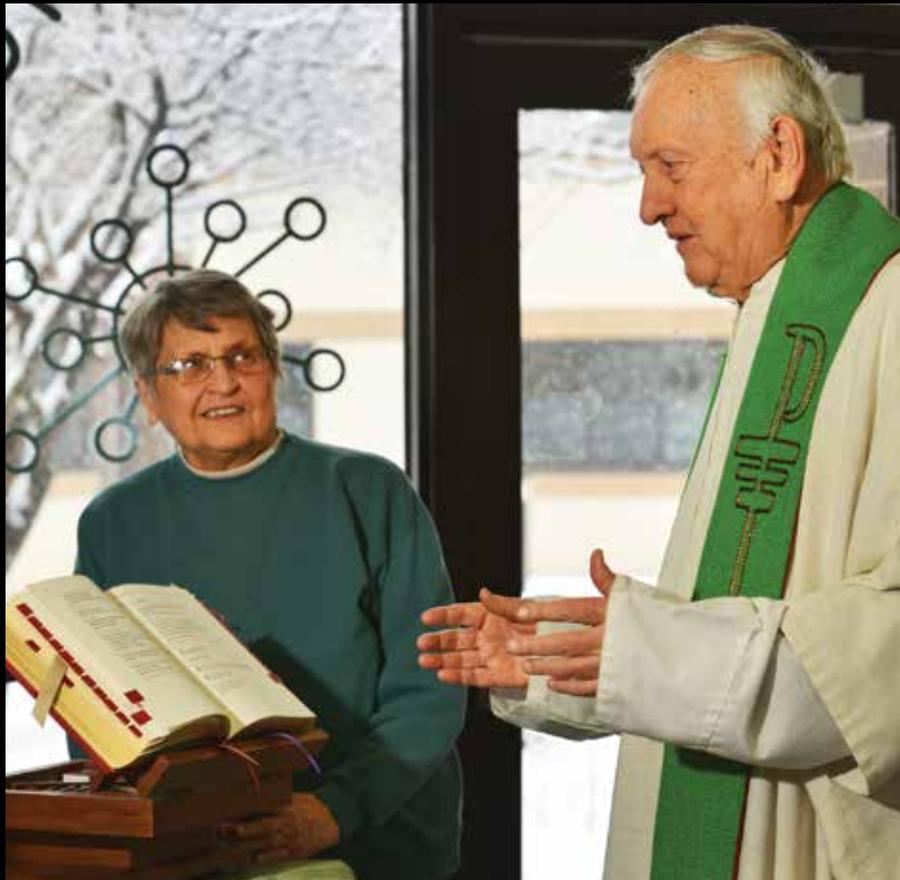
about who they are and who they want to become. In our time together, their opinion matters. In turn, I have a heightened sense of church and inclusivity. I share these insights with my students at the college.”

Prior James Baraniak, O. Praem., ministers to the sacramental needs of Catholics at Green Bay Correctional Institution. For 17 years he has offered Mass on-site every other Thursday. He is available to the inmates for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, spiritual direction, and the Rite of Christian Initiation (RCIA).

Fr. Baraniak was first encouraged to develop his prison ministry by then-Auxiliary Bishop Robert Morneau. “I had just accepted the chaplaincy for the Green Bay Packers, and Bishop Morneau counseled me to take on a ministry that would provide balance and was grounded in serving the poor and imprisoned” said Fr. Baraniak, who joined a pastoral team of one other priest and two deacons. “I discovered that my greatest joy and privilege is to welcome these men into the Catholic faith.”



Frater Michael Brennan, O. Praem., offers pastoral care in nursing homes.



Fr. Gery Meehan, O. Praem., offers Mass for the homebound at Nicolet Terrace in De Pere.

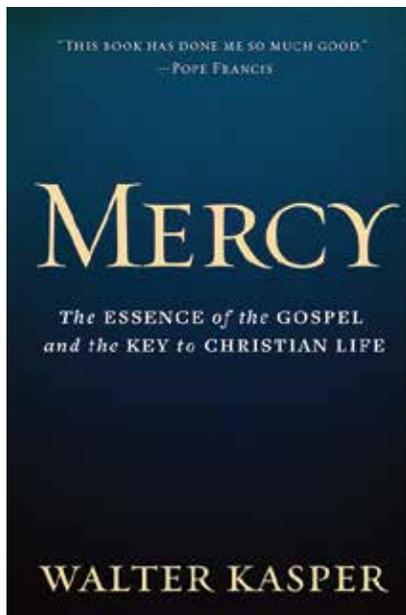
Norbertines in Service

Helping the Homeless

St. John the Evangelist Homeless Shelter in downtown Green Bay occupies the former St. John's School and serves up to 84 adult men and women on-site each night, said **Tony Pichler**, a member of the leadership team that founded the shelter in 2007. The seasonal emergency shelter is open November 1-April 30. Pichler is co-director of the Norbertine Center for Spirituality at St. Norbert Abbey and a member of the shelter's 20-member ministry team, along with Norbertine associates **Mike Dockry**, **Ellen Mommaerts**, and **Paula Rieder**; **Fr. Brian Prunty, O. Praem.**; and **Sr. Judy Miller, CSJ**, spiritual direction coordinator at the Norbertine Center for Spirituality. Lay and ordained ministry team members are present each night at the shelter to listen, visit, and pray with guests. The Norbertines also provide consistent financial support for the operation of the shelter and innovative new projects such as Spokes 4 Hope, a bicycle repair and loan service for guests of the shelter and the larger community.

Offering Mass for the Homebound

Since its inception in 1974 under the aegis of the De Pere Housing Authority, Nicolet Terrace has provided safe, dignified homes and a sense of community to people in need of affordable housing in West De Pere. **Fr. Blaise Peters, O. Praem.**, served on the board of directors when the two-story apartment complex was first built, and one year later in 1975, the Norbertines began their Mass ministry on-site. More than 30 years later, weekly Mass is still offered at Nicolet Terrace by Norbertine priests who have included **Fr. Brendan McKeough, O. Praem.**, **Fr. Dennis Burke, O. Praem.**, and **Fr. Robert Cornell, O. Praem.** Nicolet Terrace is currently served by **Fr. Gery Meehan, O. Praem.** **Frater Michael Brennan, O. Praem.**, who offers pastoral care within a Chicago nursing home, recently joined Fr. Meehan at Nicolet Terrace. About one-third of residents, many of whom are elderly, routinely attend the weekday Mass and often invite others in the community to join them.



Cardinal Kasper's *Mercy*

Encourages Us to Retrieve and Cultivate Mercy

By Dr. Michael Frisch, O. Praem., music director at St. Norbert Abbey

Within the pages of *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life* by Cardinal Walter Kasper, I was immediately fascinated by his brisk recollection of recent history to illustrate the ways we have ignored or applied the principle of mercy in modern times. His overarching thesis is that we have a great need to retrieve mercy from the annals of forgotten topics and cultivate its many blessings.

After a few relatively quick and easy introductory chapters, Cardinal Kasper delves into deep theological and academic discussions of the meaning and role of mercy. (I recommend a hot drink and plenty of sticky notes, as you will come upon thoughts that are too good to read just once.) Here are a couple of my favorites:

Mercy is not opposed to justice; rather, mercy is an extension far beyond justice. Whereas justice is the minimum we are obligated to offer another person, mercy is the maximum we can give. Justice alone can be very detached and calculating, while mercy considers the whole person.

Mercy is not simply an emotion. Like love, it must be a chosen attitude, even in difficult circumstances, to actively improve the situation of others as much as we are able. Think about the Good Samaritan. Based on the laws of the time, he was not obliged to assist the man huddled in the dirt. However, his heart was moved by mercy. Cardinal Kasper proposes, "Mercy is the perfection of the essence of God."

Readers then consider the Latin term "misericordia," which means having a heart for the poor—not only those experiencing material poverty, but also an individual's inability to access relationships, spirituality, and culture on his or her own terms, as a multifaceted and dignified person.

Pope Francis himself praised this book because it, "says that mercy changes everything; it changes the world by making it less cold and more fair." The book is a significant investment of time and contemplation. Stick with it, and you will come away with many ideas for cultivating mercy's blessings.



Rev. Dr. Jay Fostner, O. Praem., speaks with a student outside his office at St. Norbert College where he serves as vice president for mission and student affairs, a job that includes student discipline.

Hello
my name is

MERCY

By Gina Sanders Larsen

Mercy is a power that liberates, heals, restores, and gives life. We are each asked to be the face of mercy this year and all years. Now imagine actually wearing the name tag “Hello My Name is Mercy.” How would it change the way you interact with your fellow humans on the journey?

Most of us live ordinary sinful lives; that is, we avoid acts that would result in arrest or some type of expulsion or excommunication. It is the small sins of unmercifulness that threaten our souls and damage the hearts of those around us. It is in this same space, these cracks and crevasses of everyday life, where we find opportunities to be Mercy.

My father-in-law once told me about how he deals with customers when they discover their own proofing errors on a job he’s just finished at his small print shop. Inevitably, the customer will call in a crisis, needing a fix and a reprint. Many will silently hope for a discount, while others will arrive to plead their desperate case in person. Gary warmly empathizes with the customer, asks what needs to be fixed, and reprints the entire job at half price. “They never mess up the proofreading again, and I have a customer for life,” he said. Imagine! With God at the helm of the Heidelberg, we don’t even have to pay the discount rate, and he never stops the presses.

The late Fr. Conrad Kratz, O. Praem., used to tell a story about a student who was about to fail his sophomore English class at Prémontre High School. The boy, who had recently lost his father, pleaded his case in person. “Please Father, will you give me a D minus, just so I don’t have to take the class all over again?”



Fr. Robert Finnegan, O. Praem., sorting and serving food at a local pantry.

As a member of the Norbertine Volunteer Community, Katie Riesterer (2013-2014) taught 5th-8th grade language arts.



How Can You Be Mercy Today?

In social settings, make room for others and invite their voices instead of dominating the space or conversation.

Offer quiet sympathy to a parent with a crying baby in the checkout line. Avoid using body language that implies the inconvenience is sure to ruin your day.

The grandest gestures are often the most invisible. Yes, vacate your seat for another person on the bus, but act as if you were about to get up anyway. No need to make a big show of it.

Use your influence at work to build up your staff or co-workers. If you have the power to crush an idea or silence a suggestion, do not use it. Encourage instead.

At the end of the semester Fr. Conrad handed the student his report card. With trembling hands, the young man read his grades. Fr. Conrad hadn't given the student a D minus; instead, he gave him an A. He exclaimed, "Fr. Conrad, I don't deserve an A!"

Fr. Conrad said, "Well you didn't deserve a D minus either, so if I'm going to give a gift, why not give a big one? Every time you look at this report card I want you to remember two things: Fr. Conrad cares about you and God loves you." An arguably undeserving student receives a gift beyond his wildest expectations. Think what an impact that made. Do you feel that same way when you consider God's mercies showered upon you?



Fr. Michael Weber, O. Praem., spent 23 and a half years as a Catholic priest chaplain in the United States Air Force. He was occasionally asked to serve on the Air Force death notification team to notify families of the loss of a beloved son or daughter in the line of duty. The personal visits are meant

to personify mercy; that is, to offer everything possible in service to the human dignity of the soldier and his or her family. "It was the commander's duty to inform the family. I would accompany the commander, along with a member of the medical personnel. Although our visits were short, we'd spend hours afterwards following up with family members and neighbors to be sure the parents were not left alone in their grief. We accepted every possible emotion from those families, and understood the places they were coming from. I believe to be present in those moments that were painfully difficult for all of us is merciful. That's what we tried to do."

Mercy gives charitably, even with the knowledge that someone may someday take advantage. Jerry is a local landlord who made many allowances for a single woman's late rent payments. She eventually fell behind six whole months, despite finding and losing a series of part-time jobs. Her health declined and the young woman notified Jerry of her pending disability claim. Less than hopeful that he would ever recoup his income, Jerry allowed her to stay. One day she arrived with a check for the entire amount of past-due rent and a request to have a copy of the lease. "I need to keep this lease with me always. You're the first person who ever truly believed in me," she told him. Mercy calls on us to put our money (or our hearts) where our mouth is.

Rev. Dr. Jay Fostner, O. Praem., is a psychologist and vice president for mission and student affairs at St. Norbert College. "When we are being merciful, we are being called to holiness. I see students all the time who come to me and say 'I messed up, and I need another chance.' My job is to help navigate those opportunities in a way that does not punish, but educates." Fr. Fostner works within the framework that mercy does not remove responsibility for one's actions; rather, it offers hope in spite of the acknowledgement of wrongdoing. A student caught cheating, plagiarizing, or hurting another person physically or emotionally will be expected to complete a plan of restorative justice. "Students often feel like it's a punishment, but we will support even the students who are dismissed, because to be merciful is to hold one another up." Mercy makes it our business to help others succeed.



THE NORBERTINE CENTER

Picture Yourself Here

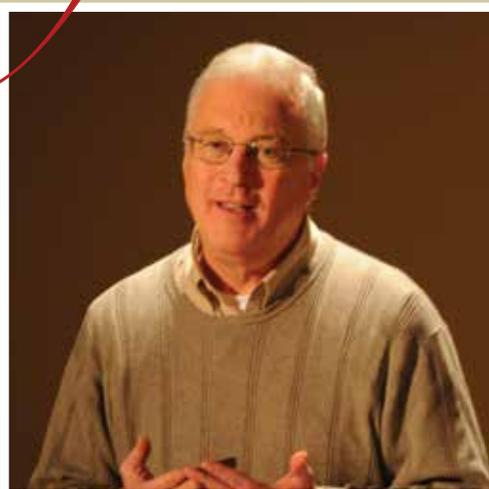
A Ministry of Mercy by Dr. Paul Wadell,
professor of theology and religious studies
at St. Norbert College

Pope Francis has declared “A Year of Mercy,” and has called all Catholics to be practitioners of God’s mercy—living sacraments of God’s compassionate love—in the world.

It should come as no surprise. Mercy is not only a central biblical theme, but also the starting point for best understanding God; indeed, the entire story of salvation can be read as an ongoing act of God’s exquisite mercy. In creation, God manifests mercy by blessing us with life and by fashioning us in His very image. In the Incarnation, God’s mercy enters our world and bursts into life in the teaching and ministry of Jesus. We see the life-giving power of God’s mercy when Jesus, stirred with compassion, heals the sick, comforts the sorrowful, feeds the hungry, and extends accepting and affirming love to all those forgotten ones who could never believe anyone might love them at all.

This narrative of God’s mercy continues at Pentecost when the first fledgling disciples, suddenly afire with the Spirit, commit themselves to fearlessly proclaiming God’s gospel of universal, merciful love to every human being they encounter. God’s mercy is the gift from which we live, the gift from which no one should ever be excluded, and the gift that makes all of us equal and all of us one.

Dr. Paul Wadell, noted professor, author, ethicist, and scholar, offers the Conrad J. Kratz, O. Praem. Abbey Lecture, A Ministry of Mercy—Blessing the World with the Liberating Power of God, on Thursday, April 14, at 6:30 p.m.



It is also a gift that should continue to live through each of us. We are given mercy in order to share it, entrusted with mercy in order to bless every person who comes our way with its life and its hope. Just as Jesus in the Gospels, people who are hurt, wounded, broken, and shattered, come our way looking for healing and life. Just as Jesus in the Gospels, people who are burdened, anxious, lonely, and lost come our way hoping to be resurrected by a merciful word and a compassionate act. The mission of every baptized Christian—and undoubtedly the mission of a faithful church—is to extend to all the merciful love, kindness, and compassion that God continually extends to us: “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful” (Luke 6:36).



Brent Weycker, president of
Tittletown Brewery



Celtic Spirit with
Wild Irish Gerry



Fr. Tim Shillcox, O. Praem.,
at the Lenten Series

for SPIRITUALITY



Edwina Gateley returns in October



An Evening of St. Brigid



Alexia Wood, executive director of St. John the Evangelist Homeless Shelter

Morning of Spiritual Renewal for Women

Filled to capacity, 150 women of all ages joined us for this highly-anticipated and much appreciated annual event. Nine presenters offered programs on a variety of topics including **What Truths Does Your Body Hold** with Sr. Judy Miller, CSJ, and **Homegrown Wisdom: Sayings that Shaped Me** with Dr. Bridget Burke Ravizza. As one participant shared, "I already have next year's event on my calendar!"

Pints with a Purpose

A new series has been developed for young adults in their 20s and 30s which includes compelling presentations, lively conversation, and delicious beer and root beer from Titledown Brewing Company. Joining us for this inaugural event was Alexia Wood, executive director of St. John the Evangelist Homeless Shelter, and Brent Weycker, founder and president of Titledown Brewing Company.

The next Pints with a Purpose, **Hops and the Holy Land** with Frater Michael Brennan, O. Praem., is being held on March 31, at 6:30 p.m.

An Irish Celebration:

An Evening of St. Brigid, Music, and Mead

The Killeen room was transformed into the Emerald Isle on February 4, with Julianne Stanz, director of New Evangelization for the Diocese of Green Bay, delightfully engaging the audience with stories about St. Brigid, Celtic spirituality, and Ireland, her native country. Wild Irish Gerry played a mix of Irish music and we all shared in a variety of Irish spirits, cheese, and breads. Sláinte!

Lenten Series:

Life Lessons from the Gospel

We have been told this series significantly deepens the Lenten journey of many participants. During the hour-long Saturday morning sessions, Fr. Tim Shillcox, O. Praem., Fr. John Bostwick, O. Praem., Dustin Katona, youth ministry coordinator, Fr. David Komatz, O. Praem., and Sr. Marla Clercx, ANG, explored the Gospel stories shared at Mass during this holy time of year.



Mark Your Calendar

Our spring season is filled with wonderful programs and retreats.

- Distinguished educator and scholar, **Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA**, is facilitating the **Triduum Retreat** from **March 24-27**. A perfect way to experience the power and message of the Triduum and Easter.
- Engaging and compelling, **Bishop Robert Morneau** is offering a preached retreat on the weekend of **April 22-24** entitled **Wisdom Figures: Fellow-Pilgrims Who Point the Way**.
- **Where Have All the Abbeys Gone? Norbertine Footprints in Spain** is being offered on **April 26**. Join **Br. Terrence Lauerman, O. Praem.**, for this lovely evening of Spanish history, art, and music while sampling prized Retuerta wines.
- **Finding God in All Things: A Silent Ignatian Retreat (June 24-26)** is facilitated by **Fr. Kevin Schneider, SJ**. He received rave reviews when he was with us two years ago and we are delighted he is returning.

For additional information or to receive a program guide, visit www.norbertines.org or call the Norbertine Center for Spirituality at (920) 337-4315.

The Habit:

An Outward Sign of Inward Spirit

by Gina Sanders Larsen

During a recent academic break, I sat with **Frater Jordan Neeck, O. Praem.**, 26, to discuss a seemingly simple idea—whether or not to wear the ankle-length white habit of the Norbertines when he is out in public in Chicago, the city where he studies for the priesthood at Catholic Theological Union.

What is it like wearing a habit in a secular environment?

The most important thing is that when you are wearing the habit, everything you do reflects not only on you, but also on every Norbertine. The habit elicits a lot of emotion, both good and bad, yet it expresses my Christian faith and vocation. Am I hiding it, or am I on fire? It's an outward sign of inward spirit.

Tell me more about that phrase, “an outward sign of inward spirit.”

If I choose not to wear the habit, I am choosing to blend in. In the streets, the white habit is a visible witness to Christ. It's like when Jesus called himself “the door” and no one can come to the Father except through Him. I am certainly not Jesus, but I choose to be present and visible to people. At times some religious or priests hide behind a collar or habit. You have to remember that what counts is a person's true character, and no article of clothing can change that. For me, the habit is a call to authenticity.

You said the habit elicits both good and bad responses from people. Can you give me some examples?

People often ask me, “What are you?” and I tell them I'm a Christian in formation for the Catholic priesthood. Many people ask me to pray for them, or they are intrigued by the idea of a priest. I've helped people who need a bus ticket or something to eat, but I've also provoked feelings of hatred. It is an imitation of Christ: trying to do good but realizing even the Son of God was not accepted by all.

Will you continue to wear your habit in public?

Yes. Even for people who do not approach me, wearing the habit shows them that someone is still interested in Christianity and Catholicism in a secular world. I hope that in wearing the habit, it is a visible sign of Christ in me and through me, and that it fosters Christian hope in a city plagued by poverty, violence, and racism. I am putting myself out there—humbly, I hope. The streets have a way of keeping you humble.

Frater Jordan Neeck, O. Praem., wears his habit on the streets of Chicago.



Past and present members of the Norbertine Volunteer Community hosted a confirmation retreat at the NVC house in Green Bay for students in the confirmation program at St. Willebrord Parish.

Reaching Out

Norbertine Volunteers Answer the Call to Mercy

Jesus Christ is God's act of premeditated mercy. As Christians we are commissioned to reach out to our brothers and sisters in the human family, especially those on the margins of society.

By Ellen Mommaerts, director of the Norbertine Volunteer Community

Established in 2008, the Norbertine Volunteer Community (NVC) is a full-time service opportunity and outreach program of the Norbertine Community of St. Norbert Abbey. Founded on core Norbertine values, this initiative invites young adults to take action and be willing instruments of God's premeditated mercy.

Communio

More than roommates, Norbertine volunteers work to understand and strive to live in an intentional community, meaning that each person commits to be physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually present. This gift of presence allows opportunities for all to grow in friendship, deepen personal and communal experiences of prayer, and challenge each other to live as disciples of Christ.

Stabilitas Loci

Pope Francis reminds us that "What's needed is work, Christian testimony, going to the suffering, getting close to them as Jesus did" (2014). If we are honest with ourselves, we realize that most of the time the greatest needs are closer than we think or would like them to be. The NVC is committed to serving the community of Green Bay and the surrounding area.

Actio

Our faith calls for an active outpouring of the corporal works of mercy, which come alive through the work of the Norbertine volunteers. On any given day they are tending a local garden that helps feed the hungry, mentoring students at St. Thomas More Catholic School, assisting at Golden House to calm the children and adult victims who are caught in the web of domestic violence, or sharing prayer with a homebound parishioner during a pastoral visit on behalf of St. Willebrord Parish. In the words of Pope Francis, "...with our faith we must create a 'culture of encounter,' a culture of friendship, a culture in which we find brothers and sisters" (2013).

Contemplatio

"Seeking the face of God in everything, everyone, all the time, and his hand in every happening; this is what it means to be contemplative in the heart of the world." This quote by Blessed Teresa of Calcutta challenges us to go where we are stretched most, to be uncomfortable, and learn deeply about true need from whomever we meet. When we keep a distance, we are safe; our hearts cannot grow in the same way as when we open our hearts to those most different from ourselves. If we dare to live this way we may just discover that God made us more alike than different...human.



"The NVC helped me discover myself. The people I met and new experiences taught me to listen for God's call when the next step is unclear. Professionally I found my passion and was offered full-time employment with my service site. The relationships and lessons learned from building and growing in community cannot compare to any other experience. It is this experience that has shaped who I am today." —Koren Bandoch, NVC 2011-2012

News, Honors, and Distinctions



FR. JOHN BOSTWICK, O. PRAEM., and **BR. STEVEN HERRO, O. PRAEM.,** contribute to “Linking the Lectionary to Peace and Justice,” a new resource for homilists from the Conference of Major Superiors of Men. They share ideas for Sunday readings from the perspective of the Church’s peace and justice tradition.



In January **BR. STEVEN HERRO, O. PRAEM.,** was the guest speaker at the Green Bay Area Unitarian Universalist’s weekly assembly, presenting on “Mercy Across the Traditions.” This March he spoke about “The Universal Appeal of Pope Francis’ *Laudato Si* (On Care for Our Common Home)” at an ecumenical gathering in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.



In collaboration with six co-authors, **FR. MATTHEW DOUGHERTY, O. PRAEM.,** wrote an academic paper soon to be published in the *Journal of Applied Ecology*, entitled, “Environmental DNA (eDNA) detects the invasive rusty crayfish (*Orconectes rusticus*) at low abundances.” The team’s biological research focused on eDNA as a detection and management tool for this species.



REV. DR. JACK MACCARTHY, O. PRAEM., has dedicated much of his life to caring for the physical and spiritual needs of the people in Peru. Earlier this year he visited for three weeks, attending to the Centro de Salud in Santa Clotilde and the 13 outlying clinics, as well as attending meetings with the Bishop and the Board of Directors of PANGO. He shared many stories of his South American ministry during a recent interview on northeast Wisconsin’s CW 14 Sunday “Focus” television program. For a detailed account of Fr. MacCarthy’s medical ministry, see the Fall/Winter 2013 issue of *Abbey Magazine*.



A member of the Black Catholic Theological Symposium since the 90s, **FR. JAMES HERRING, O. PRAEM.,** helped coordinate the 2015 event held on St. Norbert College’s campus last fall. Fr. Herring, along with Fr. Maurice Nutt, a member of the Redemptorist Parish Mission Preaching Team based in Chicago, was featured on the February “Conversations From St. Norbert College” television show to discuss the role of blacks in the Catholic Church today.



This March author and catechist **FR. ALFRED MCBRIDE, O. PRAEM.,** was honored at Relevant Radio Green Bay’s “Christ Brings Hope Award Dinner.” The annual award is presented to an American Catholic who has worked with extraordinary dedication to spread the good news and hope of Christ. Fr. McBride has published 50 books and is a regular celebrant of a number of the station’s weekly broadcast Masses.



Bishop David Ricken appointed **FR. TIM SHILLCOX, O. PRAEM.,** to a five-year term on the College of Consultors for the Diocese of Green Bay. The bishop consults this body in temporal matters, and in the event of a vacancy this body chooses a ‘diocesan administrator’ to serve until a new bishop is appointed. Fr. Shillcox, who recently directed a week-long community retreat for his Norbertine confreres at Santa María de la Vid Abbey in Albuquerque, has also been elected to a three-year term as the Vicariate II representative for the Presbyteral Council of the Diocese of Green Bay, an advisory body to the bishop.



FR. JEREMY TOBIN, O. PRAEM., continues to be actively involved with social justice work through the Priory of St. Moses the Black in Raymond, Mississippi. In addition to speaking at many rallies to promote fair legislation, he is a member of the Catholic Charities Poverty Task Force and assisted in planning the annual “Catholic Day at the Capitol” event.

In Memoriam



FR. ROBERT FELLER, O. PRAEM., passed into God's Eternal Kingdom on February 8, 2016.

Fr. Feller was born on December 28, 1922, in Green Bay, Wisconsin. His home parish was Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church. After graduating from West High School in 1942, Fr. Feller received a B.A. degree in philosophy from St. Norbert College, De Pere, in 1952.

Upon entering the Norbertine Community of St. Norbert Abbey, Fr. Feller was vested as a novice on August 28, 1949. He professed simple vows on August 28, 1951, professed solemn vows on August 28, 1954, and was ordained to the priesthood on June 4, 1955.

In 1954 Fr. Feller began teaching assignments at St. Norbert High School, De Pere. His parochial and chaplaincy ministry included numerous pastorates in the Green Bay area. A military chaplain in the United States Air Force, Fr. Feller also served as director of pastoral services and chaplain at St. Mary's Hospital Medical Center in Green Bay for many years. He was chaplain at Veterans Administration Medical Center and Veterans Administration Hospital, Tuskegee, Alabama, from 1983 until 1993.

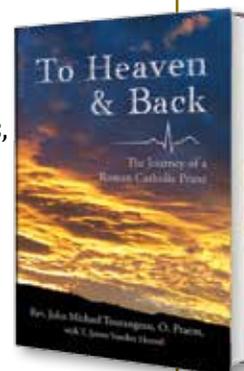
Although retiring from external ministerial duties in 2001, Fr. Feller continued internal ministry at St. Norbert Abbey, ministering to his Norbertine confreres and abbey employees with any number of charitable acts of kindness. In a spirit of gratitude and thanksgiving, Fr. Feller celebrated the 60th anniversary of his priesthood ordination on June 5, 2015.

Book Author



FR. JOHN TOURANGEAU, O. PRAEM., who had an afterlife experience following a major heart attack, emphatically states, "Heaven is for real!" Within this enlightening and hope-filled

book he weaves a powerful and dynamic tapestry of the Kingdom of God at hand through the exploration of Christian tradition, Sacred Scripture, and Catholic teaching, as well as his own lived experience.



Norbertine Volunteer Community



Earlier this year the Norbertine Volunteer Community (NVC) welcomed **MATTHEW FERCH** from Wauwatosa, Wisconsin. Matthew is a recent graduate of St. Norbert College, where he served as a resident assistant.

With a double major in political science and religious studies, his goal is to attend graduate school and study theology. As a Norbertine volunteer, Matthew is serving in parish ministry with Fr. Andy Cribben, O. Praem., at St. Willebrord in Green Bay.

To learn more about the NVC, a full-time service opportunity and outreach program of the Norbertine community of St. Norbert Abbey, contact Ellen Mommaerts, director: **(920) 403-2944** or **ellen.mommaerts@norbertines.org**. An application is also available online: www.norbertines.org.

Holy Doors Open Until November 13, 2016



A holy door, or *porta sancta*, has been used as a ritualistic expression of conversion since the 15th century. Pilgrims pass through it as a gesture of leaving the past behind and crossing the threshold from sin to grace.

Bishop David Ricken of the Catholic Diocese of Green Bay designated three locations for **HOLY DOORS OF MERCY**: St. Francis Xavier Cathedral in Green Bay, the Shrine of St. Joseph located within Old St. Joseph Church on the St. Norbert College campus in De Pere, and the Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help in Champion, Wisconsin.

As Pope Francis shared, "There is only one way that opens wide the entrance into the life of communion with God: this is Jesus, the one and absolute way to salvation. To him alone can the words of the Psalmist be applied in full truth: 'This is the door of the Lord where the just may enter' (Ps 118:20)."



ST. NORBERT ABBEY
1016 N. BROADWAY, DE PERE, WI 54115

2016 SPRING CALENDAR FOR THE NORBERTINE CENTER FOR SPIRITUALITY



March 24-27

MARCH

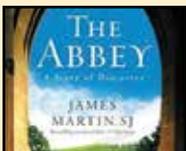
- 20 – Taizé Prayer, Abbey Church, 7 p.m.
- 24-27 – Triduum Retreat with Sr. Dianne Bergant, Thursday, 4 p.m.-Sunday, 10 a.m.
- 31 – Pints with a Purpose Series: Hops and the Holy Land (Frater Michael Brennan), 6:30-8 p.m.



April 26

APRIL

- 6 – Laudato Si: An Overview (Br. Steven Herro, Marge Mattice), 6:30-7:30 p.m.
- 12 – Spring Days of Prayer and Reflection (Kathie Tilot), 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
- 14 – Conrad J. Kratz Abbey Lecture: A Ministry of Mercy (Dr. Paul Wadell), 6:30-8 p.m.
- 16 – Deepening the Spiritual Life: The Journey Continues (Pr. Lee Goodwin, Sr. Judy Miller), 8 a.m.-1 p.m.
- 16 – Canon John O. Bruce Memorial Organ Concert (Hector Olivera), Abbey Church, 2 p.m.
- 17 – Taizé Prayer, Abbey Church, 7 p.m.
- 20, 27 – Laudato Si: A Discussion Series (Br. Steven Herro, Marge Mattice), 6:30-8 p.m.
- 22-24 – Wisdom Figures: Fellow Pilgrims Who Point the Way (Bishop Robert Morneau), Friday, 4:30 p.m.-Sunday, 11 a.m.
- 24 – Schola d'Arezzo Concert (Gregorian chant of the Easter season), Abbey Church, 2:30 p.m.
- 26 – Where Have All the Abbeys Gone? Norbertine Footprints in Spain (Br. Terrence Lauerman), 6:30-8:30 p.m.



May 19

MAY

- 3 – The Old Testament: The Book of Psalms (Dr. John Craghan), 6:30-8 p.m.
- 4 – Laudato Si: A Discussion Series (Br. Steven Herro, Marge Mattice), 6:30-8 p.m.
- 11 – Coffee and Conversation with Fr. Bill Ribbens, 10-11 a.m.
- 13-15 – Finding Balance: A Mindfulness Retreat (Pr. Lee Goodwin), Friday, 7 p.m.-Sunday, 2 p.m.
- 14 – Who Is “Grace” and What Makes Her So “Amazing”? (Betty Manion), 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
- 15 – Taizé Prayer, Abbey Church, 7 p.m.
- 18 – Art as Divine Creativity: Allowing the Inner Artist to Come Out and Play (Rev. Tricia Matthew), 9 a.m.-Noon
- 19 – The Abbey: A Book Discussion with Abbot Gary Neville, 6:30-8 p.m.
- 21 – Canon John O. Bruce Memorial Organ Concert (Gregory Hand), Abbey Church, 2 p.m.
- 24 – Models for Living in the Land of the Free (Fr. Willie Van De Loo), 6:30-8 p.m.



June 24-26

JUNE

- 14 – Spring Days of Prayer and Reflection (Kathie Tilot), 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
- 16 – Sunset Labyrinth Walk (Kathie Tilot, Keith McGillivray), 6:15 p.m.
- 17-23 – Summer Directed Retreat, Friday, 4 p.m.-Thursday, 1 p.m.
- 19 – Taizé Prayer, Abbey Church, 7 p.m.
- 24-26 – Finding God in All Things: A Silent Ignatian Retreat (Fr. Kevin Schneider), Friday, 4 p.m.-Sunday, 1 p.m.



July 17

JULY

- 17 – Taizé Prayer, Abbey Church, 7 p.m.

SAVE THE DATE, FALL 2016

- September 23-25 – Wisdom Figures: Fellow Pilgrims Who Point the Way (Bishop Robert Morneau)
- October 21-23 – Mystics, Rebels, and Prophets: Women Who Went Before Us and Walk with Us Today (Edwina Gateley)

For a complete list of programs and retreats, please visit www.norbertines.org or call (920) 337-4315 to receive our latest program guide.



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