



The St. Michael Messenger

News for Friends and Benefactors of St. Michael's Abbey and Preparatory School

Dear Friends of St. Michael's,

Fifty years is a lot of time, a generation's length, half a century. How rapidly the years and decades pass that make up a half a century, and this year, Norbertines have been teaching and ministering in Orange County for 50 years, a golden landmark. It was in 1957 that Cardinal McIntyre invited the Hungarian refugee priests to teach at Mater Dei high school, and our priests have been teaching there ever since, the most continuous apostolate of our community, from the first days of our arrival in the Southland.

Since last I wrote, there have been significant strides made in the land acquisition process. Because of this, we look forward to another visit from Jean-Louis Pagès this spring. He will be having meetings with the on-site architect and the builder, so that the new abbey will be built to California code. This is a further and very exciting stage of bringing the idea to actuality.

In this issue, frater Ambrose Criste writes from Rome and briefly describes the international scope of the members of the Generalate house. The ongoing history of St. Michael's continues to unfold in the series of articles on our abbey's history.

As the project of expansion moves ahead, some might say the process *seems* to accelerate, which is actually not true. It *is*, in fact, accelerating, and this makes such a great work as exciting as it is important.

May the Lord reward you for your continued support.


✠ Eugene J. Hayes, O.Praem.



The planning of a new abbey is a great spiritual adventure; we look to the essentials of Norbertine life and see the challenges to living it in our present facility. Projecting from that, we are able to envision what the new abbey should be like.

Last year's issues of The St. Michael Messenger brought you to see the different places of an abbey and their function. This year, we will revisit some of these places, and contrast them



to our situation in the present abbey as we prepare to build the new abbey.

The dining hall or refectory in a monastic community is a place like the church, where the confreres come together three times a day. Breakfast is taken in silence; during lunch there is table reading, one of the seminarians first reads a portion of the Rule of St. Augustine to the community and then continues reading a book on a spiritual topic. Dinner begins and ends with brief readings as well. This custom of having a text read out loud during meals is as old as monastic life itself.

When the community erected its first buildings in 1961, the small dining hall constructed at that time, was more of a multi-purpose room than a refectory, since the fathers shared it with students of the high school during the academic year, and with campers during the summer. In the mid-1980's, a small room where the fathers and seminarians currently eat was added, while the larger room served the high school community. The summer months have proven too

hectic for the priests to have the traditional reading at meals and they are unable to maintain this practice during Summer Camp.

One of the countless benefits of the new abbey and school will be that dining for the high school and summer camp will be in a separate location from the abbey refectory. This will not only offer the Norbertines the opportunity of taking their meals traditionally year-round, it will also allow our young students and summer campers to enjoy their meals without fear of disturbing the religious community.



CHRISTMAS on the Hilltop

LETTERS FROM ROME



Last time we wrote you, frater Juan Diego reported on extraordinary events in the life of our Roman house: serving Mass for the Holy Father at St. Peter's Basilica. This time, I thought I would concentrate on something that touches our daily lives: the members of the Generalate house, the men with whom we live, pray and work here in Rome.

The Norbertines in the Roman house come from many places and backgrounds. With the Abbot General, who hails from Germany, at the head of the house, there are members of our Order from Belgium, England and the UK, France, India, the Transylvanian region of Romania, and the USA.

Many of these priests serve as officials of the Norbertine order, while two are involved working for the Universal Church in offices of the Roman Curia. Merely having such cultural latitude in one place is a learning experience.

In addition to these Norbertine priests and seminarians at the Roman house, there are other non-Norbertine priests who live here while they continue their studies. These are men from India, Italy, Kenya, Nigeria, Poland, Rwanda, the Sudan, and Uganda. Each one has his story to share, and many have had incredible experiences. One of the priests from Africa recently told me of his experience of persecution and imprisonment for being a priest, which included being beaten at the altar during the celebration of Mass. It dawned on me that I have the privilege of living with a confessor of the faith.

There is something about being in Rome, even the ordinary becomes extraordinary. How fortunate we are to be able to study here. It truly is the heart of the Church.

In Christ,
frater Ambrose Criste, O.Praem.



Photos by: R. Belcher



Newly vested novices (from l to r): Novice Master Fr. Augustine Puchner, fr. Herman Joseph, fr. Jacob, fr. Bruno, fr. Ignatius and fr. Lorenzo.



The Pioneer Press

News from St. Michael's Preparatory School • www.stmichaelsprep.org



With so many avenues of education available for parents to choose from, why is the boarding school, which otherwise seems a dying breed, still a viable and attractive option?

Although there are many aspects under which the advantages of a boarding school education may be appreciated, we at St. Michael's always return to the three main points of our formation: faith, academics and character.

In a time when so many are self-conscious about professing their faith publicly, St. Michael's students actively engage others in apologetic debate: for the student at St. Michael's, the Catholic faith is like the air he breathes. Why is this so? Because we are a Catholic school, every student takes religion at each grade level. But because we are a boarding school, our students have the privilege of attending both daily Mass in the morning and exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in the evening. The sacrament of Confession is available to students every night of the week. And because St. Michael's is a boarding school in the setting of a Norbertine religious community, there is the constant influence and example of men who have consecrated their lives to God. No other Catholic high school in the diocese has more than three Norbertines involved; St. Michael's has in its faculty and staff nine priests, two deacons, and a seminarian. It is, in effect, an education in faith in a unique setting of faith.

"And so we came to Rome..."
(Acts 28:14)
by Stephen Dudro '08

Every year, the juniors with some of their fathers, are invited to go to Rome for two weeks and stay in the Norbertine house there while touring the city. As a member of the junior class, I was one of those happy few who had the privilege of going to Rome over the Christmas break.



When we arrived, we were immediately immersed in Italian culture, as the taxi driver swerved through traffic, ignoring those little white lines painted on the road. Welcome to Roma. Every morning we had Mass and then set out to tour the city. For the first part of each day, we were usually guided by either Fr. Victor or Fr. Gabriel, later in the day breaking into smaller groups to explore the dazzling array of sights. We saw some of the most famous landmarks in the world: the Trevi Fountain, the Villa Borghese, the Spanish steps, St. Peter's Basilica, and the Roman Forum, to name a few.



We also made two day-trips, one to Assisi, city of St. Francis, and one to Florence, city of art, enabling us to experience some of greater Italy. Living and breathing the same air as the Emperors of Rome, dining on exquisite food, spending quality time with classmates and fathers, eating large amounts of gelato, seeing the actual bones of St. Peter and watching his current successor pass not more than ten feet away, I'm sure one would be hard pressed to claim a better field trip.



Photo by R. Belcher

St. Michael's Prep Alumni News

Terry Weeden '64AA is working on his Ph.D. at the University of Hull in England doing a translation and analysis of the late 15th century Norbertine Bishop Robert Redman's visitation letters.

Michael Flynn '79 visited St. Michael's for the Alumni weekend. He currently lives in Washington.

Gregg Ledergerber '80 also visited for the Alumni weekend. His father passed away last summer. He has two daughters: Cora, 10, and Amy, 5. His business, Perfect Image Products, Inc., is growing: just expanded to Canada, Mexico, Switzerland, Spain and England.

Paul Harper '83, has been flying B-52s ever since graduating from the Air Force Academy. He has served his country in Iraq and Afghanistan. Currently, he is first officer on a DC-10 for FedEx. He and his wife, Kristina have six children.

Lowell Schaper '05 and his wife, Joanna welcomed their first child, Faith Immaculata, on February 6th.

Alan Ng '06 currently attends Christendom College in Virginia where Fr. Justin and Fr. Augustine recently attended a vocations weekend.

For more alumni news, go to www.stmichaelsprep.org

Do you want to stay in touch with teachers and friends from your days on the hilltop? Please send us news about and photos of yourself and your family. You can do this by sending an email to alumni@stmichaelsprep.org. Be sure to tell us whether you wish to make your contact information available to others, so we can respect your wishes.

Alumni Weekend and the Christmas Concert

To "kickstart" the afternoon before the evening Christmas choir concert, St. Michael's Prep hosted the annual alumni soccer game. Joining forces with a few seminarians, returning alumni played against the current St. Michael's team. As would be expected, the "old" graduates had a slow start but eventually picked up speed as the game progressed. This fact, however, caught the home team off-guard and eventually turned the tide of the game in favor of the alumni. The game ultimately ended in pizza and soda back up the hill.

When it came time for the concert, all of the choir members went into the sacristy, put on their cassocks and lined up for the procession. Practicing and preparing since the beginning of the school year, the singers were more than ready for the concert. The repertoire consisted of three arrangements by Sir David Willcocks, two pieces by J. S. Bach, and the Gregorian *Alma Redemptoris Mater*. Everything during the concert went according to plan with Father Jerome as the director, Fr. Victor as the main organist, and Justin Howard '08 as the "guest organist" for *Zion Hears the Watchmen's Voices* by J. S. Bach. The concert concluded with the singing of St. Michael's *Alma Mater* and with the choir members processing out.

At the reception that followed, all of the worn out but happily content choir members mingled with the family and friends who attended, there to receive a host of well deserved praise from all sides. It was but the closing of another well planned concert with the prospect of many more to come.



On February 15, the senior class went to the Getty Museum to see the icons on display there from the renowned St. Catherine's Monastery. Located at the foot of Mt. Sinai and built by the Emperor Justinian in the year 548 AD, the monastery is home to about half of the surviving icons of the Byzantine era. We were blessed to see some more spectacular specimens: the *Christ Pantocrator*; the *Theotokos with Christ and Sts. Theodore and George*; one of St. Peter the Apostle and one of the Annunciation with a ghostly image of Christ vaguely visible on the mantle of Theotokos. After appreciating such treasures, we visited the Cathedral of the Holy Transfiguration of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad in Los Angeles and spoke with the craftsman who was constructing the onion domes for its roof. Our class saw "Icons in Action" and came to respect and fall in love with these "windows into heaven". After this we went to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Lacerte, parents of alumnus Ricky Lacerte, for dinner and then returned to the Abbey, reflecting on all that we had seen and experienced that day.



Even before the shoulder pads and helmets were put into storage until next year's football season, St. Michael's soccer players hit the field...just not ours. Because of overusing the field – a problem we hope to solve in the expansion project – the soccer try-outs and first few weeks of practice had to be conducted at a nearby park while the football team held its final practices during play-offs and the grass got reseeded.

Many of this year's players on the soccer team had never participated in organized soccer before coming to St. Michael's, which makes the defense's progress this year all the more amazing. The various drills and personal instruction have advanced our team's skills years beyond their actual experience. Although they still have a long way to go, with perseverance and diligent practice, the team shows great promise for the future.

St. Michael's head soccer coach is Mr. Marcel Tomescu. With many years of experience as player and coach, Mr. Tomescu brings to each practice new drills, moving the players to challenge themselves as his contagious love of the game inspires them to try their best. Off the field, Mr. Tomescu is also the head of St. Michael's mathematics department. Teaching all levels of the discipline – algebra, geometry, advanced algebra, pre-calculus and calculus – his

enthusiasm for mathematics in the classroom is as inspiring as his great love for soccer on the field.

Assisting Mr. Tomescu this year is frater Benedict Solomon, who, after having finished his second year of theology in Rome, is on his apostolic year teaching freshman religion at St. Michael's. A soccer player from his childhood, fr. Benedict brings his expertise to complement Mr. Tomescu in the coaching staff, and we hope to have him return after his theological studies are completed.



*Come learn more about
St. Michael's Preparatory School*

OPEN HOUSE

Saturday, April 21
3:30 – 5:00 p.m.

ENTRANCE EXAM & OPEN HOUSE

Saturday, May 19
9:15 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
* reservations required

For more information on the Prep School including admissions, please call (949) 858-0222 x237, email admissions@stmichaelsprep.org or visit our website at www.stmichaelsprep.org

Spring Concert

On Sunday, May 20th at 7:00 p.m. in the Abbey Church, the choir of St. Michael's Prep will present a concert of sacred music. **Please come join us!**





From the Hilltop

News from St. Michael's Abbey • www.abbeynews.com

HISTORY of St. Michael's Part VI



Groundbreaking of St. Michael's (then) junior seminary in August 1960.

When St. Michael's first opened it was in a remote corner of Orange County, just off a long, winding, two-lane road with a rural route address and newly laid utilities, with only a roadside bar nearby. Lest the reader imagine that we are mistaking the past for the future as we pursue our expansion project, let's make it clear that the year is 1961 and the road is Santiago Canyon Road, and not Ortega Highway in the not-too-distant early years of the 21st century! Yes, it's "*déjà-vu* all over again."

In 1957 the fathers made their way to Santa Ana to the new (more of that *déjà-vu!*) co-ed Catholic High School Mater Dei at the invitation of Cardinal MacIntyre of Los Angeles. The fathers came with the understanding that they could open a religious house and take in vocations in view of a permanent foundation. They pooled their meager resources from teacher salaries, Mass intentions, and week-end parish supply and put a down payment on the property which is now St. Michael's Abbey on the no longer remote El Toro Road surrounded by the communities of Santa Margarita, Mission Viejo, and Foothill Ranch, just off the 241 Tollroad. The first years were filled with hard work and challenges, not the least of which were financial. We were a small community founded from a mother abbey under communist oppression and so not able to help us out materially.

As some readers may recall, the many changes of the sixties led throughout the church in American to a lessening of early vocations on the junior seminary model, and so in 1968 the fathers decided to change the junior seminary into a college-preparatory boarding school. 1968, a year so full of turmoil both in the Catholic Church and in society, saw the fathers take a prophetic stance at their annual chapter held on St. Michael's day. The Norbertines of St. Michael's began to publish vocation ads promoting fidelity to the teaching of the Pope and to the Church's tradition of priestly formation and divine worship, as well as to a strong opposition to the errors of Communism and its political allies. This won them a certain amount of opposition from some quarters, but also with increasing support from the faithful, who wanted, in the words of our founding abbot "to hold fast to what is good in the old without rejecting what is good in the new." Vocations came in steadily and, as the students studied at home and at the order's generalate in Rome, newly ordained Norbertines began to serve in the schools and parishes of Orange County. Soon the community would obtain full autonomy as a permanent house of the Norbertine order, just at the same time as the county of Orange became a new permanent diocese of the Universal Church. Next time then: the seventies, not *retro*, but for real.

Join us in celebrating with the Norbertine confreres

The Silver Jubilee of Ordination for Fr. Gabriel Daniel Stack

Thursday, June 28th at 6:00 p.m.

Church of the Assumption

St. Michael's Abbey

&

Ordinations to the Priesthood and Diaconate

Friday, June 29th at 6:00 p.m.

Mission Basilica

San Juan Capistrano

NORBERTINE SAINTS

ST. NORBERT

St. Norbert receives the rule from St. Augustine. This is the oldest image of St. Norbert from the 12th century.

Around the year 1115, Norbert of Xanten was an educated, tall, handsome, popular and wealthy cleric, the *habitué* of noble courts and the *protégé* the Prince-Archbishop of Cologne. His prospects for worldly success were very great, so great that he deferred his priestly ordination in order to be freer for a prodigious social life, remaining a subdeacon and dressing in lay clothes for years. He was offered dioceses which he turned down in the well-founded hope of better possibilities in the future. In short, he was the quintessential career ecclesiastic,

found in various forms in every age of the Church's history. He was not yet especially bad: just mediocre and worldly, which are qualities that ultimately catch up with the clergy and finally mean just plain bad.

But God had revealed the future greatness of the man to his mother while he was still in her womb, and was biding His own divine time, until one fair spring day when Norbert was riding with a servant to visit a lady friend near Cologne. A storm blew up all of a sudden, lightning flashed and thunder roared. Lightning threw Norbert from his mount and into a crack of the earth opened by the bolt, where as the Psalmist says "horse and rider lay stunned." When he came to, Norbert did not cross the ditch the Lord had made for him, he turned back, he converted and ever after lived for Him. First he went on a long retreat at a nearby Benedictine abbey, then he requested and received ordination as deacon and priest, and then he embarked on a life of penance and itinerant preaching. This caused a stir among his former clerical companions, and so he went to the court of the Pope Gelasius II, who gave him full faculties to preach anywhere in the world.

Norbert's real desire was to reform the clergy so that they lived in common after the example of the apostles in Acts 2. For this he would have to settle down, and so he did at Prémontré in the diocese of Laon in Picardy in Northwestern France. When he was called by Pope Honorius II to become Archbishop of Magdeburg in far-off Saxony, Norbert brought his order of canons regular there as well. As the order grew, Norbert became the principal defender of obedience to the Pope against the same kind of clergy he had once been. He was made chancellor of the Holy Roman Empire. All the while he maintained a life of simplicity and constant prayer. When he died in 1134 he was entombed in the order's church of Our Lady in Magdeburg. After the church was taken over by the Lutherans, his relics were transferred with to Prague in 1627. They rest to this day in the magnificent abbey church of Strahov-Mt. Sion overlooking the city. St. Norbert's feast day on the universal calendar in June 6th. May he watch over his priest sons and the faithful they serve here and throughout the world!

QUESTION AND ANSWER

Q *Why do the Norbertines wear white habits? You look like little popes!*

A In the movement for the reform of the clergy which gave birth to our order in the 1100's there were two dominant standards: the models of priestly life presented in Sacred Scripture and the ideal of simplicity of life. The white clothing of the angels in the Gospel who announced the Lord's Resurrection at the tomb was a strong symbol for the Norbertines since their vocation is to fulfill the same role at the altar. Undyed wool was a sign of purity, penance and voluntary poverty. White was adopted later by other reforming orders inspired by the Norbertines, like the Dominicans in the 1200s. It was a Dominican pope, St. Pius V who began the custom of the pope's white cassock: so the papal white does ultimately come from us! The present constitutions of the Norbertine order say this about the holy habit: "Our customary white habit has a threefold significance: sanctity of life, the tradition of the Church, and the unity of the Order." Following a tradition common to some other orders as well, like the Carmelites and Passionists, Our Lady is often shown giving the holy habit to St. Norbert in a vision. She certainly wants her priest sons to be faithful witnesses of the Risen Lord, marked by the habit of a holy life.

Patron saints are chosen as special protectors or guardians over areas of life that are important to us. The saints listed are either Norbertine saints or patrons of the confreres of St. Michael's.

April 5 St. Vincent Ferrer, O.P.

Patron saint of builders and construction workers

April 26 St. Ludolph, O.Praem.

May 2 St. James

Patron saint of pharmacists

May 10 St. Damien of Molokai

Patron saint of lepers

May 12 St. Simon of Cyrene

May 14 St. Matthias

May 16 St. Brendan

Patron saint of sailors

May 17 St. Pascal Baylon

Patron saint of cooks and Eucharistic organizations

May 24 St. Herman Joseph, O.Praem.

Patron saint of St. Michael's Preparatory School

May 25 St. Hildebrand (Gregory VII)

May 26 St. Philip Neri

Patron saint of U.S. Army Special Forces

June 1 St. Justin Martyr

Patron saint of public speakers and philosophers

June 3 St. Charles Luanga

Patron saint of Catholic youth and converts

June 6 St. Norbert

Patron saint of peacemakers and founder of the Norbertine order

June 9 St. Ephrem

Patron saint of spiritual directors and poets

June 15 St. Isfrid, O.Praem.

June 22 St. Thomas More

Patron saint of lawyers, politicians and civil servants

June 24 St. John the Baptist

Patron saint of epileptics, the Order of Malta and monastic life

June 27 St. Ladislaus of Hungary

June 29 SS. Peter and Paul

Patron saint of fishermen, bakers, butchers, cobblers and clock makers

July 1 Blessed Junipero Serra

July 9 SS. Adrian and James, O.Praem.

July 11 St. Benedict

Patron saint of Europe, farmers and monks

July 13 St. Eugene of Carthage

July 14 St. Hroznata, O.Praem.

July 20 St. Elias

July 21 St. Victor of Marseilles



Photo by R. Belcher

Calendar Of Events

April	1	Palm Sunday
	2	Chrism Mass
	6	Good Friday *
	8	EASTER *
	16	Classes resume (Prep School)
	21	Prep School Open House 3:30 – 5:00 p.m.
May	13	Mother's Day
	19	Prep School Entrance Exam** & Open House 9:00 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
	20	Spring Choir Concert 7:00 p.m. - Abbey Church
	28	Memorial Day holiday
	29	Prep School Class of 2007 Graduation 7:00 p.m. – Abbey Church
June	8	Prep School Last Day of School
	16	New Student Orientation
	18	Father's Day Picnic 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.
	28	Silver Jubilee of Ordination for Fr. Gabriel Stack, O.Praem. 6:00 p.m. - Abbey Church
	29	Ordinations to the priesthood and diaconate 6:00 p.m. – Mission Basilica San Juan Capistrano
July	1	Summer Camp* begins – runs through August 4
	4	Independence Day

* For more information on Lent and Easter services and Summer Camp, please visit www.abbeynews.com

** Registration for Entrance Exam is required. Please contact admissions@stmichaelsprep.org

Mass is held each day at 7:00 a.m. and on Sundays at 11:00 a.m.

For further information on calendar of Liturgies and events, please visit www.abbeynews.com

For more information about the Prep School, please visit www.stmichaelsprep.org

St. Michael's Abbey Father's Day Picnic

Sunday, June 17, 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Bring a picnic basket and visit with the Norbertines!

Enter the sweepstakes drawing to win the

\$3,000 Grand Prize!

All proceeds go to the Seminarians' Education Fund

Want To Help St. Michael's?

There are many ways that you can contribute.

- The Abbey and the school have year-round needs that rely upon your generosity.
- Many students receive scholarships and your continued generosity allows these young men to receive the best education available.
- Many companies offer an Employer's Matching Gift Program that you can ask about at your work.
- Have you considered including a charitable bequest as part of your will? Or donating a gift of stock?
- A simple gesture will have far-reaching effects: it will help clothe, feed, house and educate a rapidly growing number of seminarians; it will enhance the sacramental ministry of the Abbey and it will help to meet the retirement needs of our Norbertine priests.

For more information on how you can donate, please call (949) 858-0222 x264.



Prayer to St. Michael

St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle; be our defense against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray, and do thou, O prince of the heavenly host, by the power of God, thrust into hell Satan and all the other evil spirits who go about the world for the ruin of souls. Amen.

An envelope has been included in this newsletter to allow you to request the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass to be celebrated for you and your loved ones, both living and deceased.

Duc in Altum

"Put out into the deep" (Luke 5:4)

Guidance and Discernment for Future Priests

Are you called to the Catholic priesthood? How do you prepare? Where do you go? The Norbertine Fathers of St. Michael's are holding a series of vocational conferences for men ages 18 – 28 interested in the priesthood. 'Come and see' if Christ is calling you.

Date	Topic
Tuesday, April 17, 2007	<i>Misconceptions about the Priesthood</i> Rev. Justin Ramos, O.Praem.
Tuesday, April 24, 2007	<i>The Priest: Alter Christus</i> Rev. Augustine Puchner, O.Praem.
Tuesday, May 1, 2007	<i>Marian Devotion & the Priesthood</i> Rev. Gregory Dick, O.Praem.
Tuesday, May 8, 2007	<i>Soul of the Apostolate</i> Rev. fr. Juan Diego Emerson, O.Praem.
Tuesday, May 15, 2007	<i>Spiritual Life of the Priest</i> Rev. Thomas Nelson, O.Praem.
Tuesday, May 22, 2007	<i>Formation of the Priestly Mind</i> Rev. Sebastian Walshe, O.Praem.
Tuesday, June 5, 2007	<i>Consecrated Celibacy & the Priesthood</i> Very Rev. Hugh Barbour, O.Praem.
Tuesday, June 12, 2007	<i>The Priest & the Holy Eucharist</i> Rev. Charbel Grbavac, O.Praem.
Tuesday, June 19, 2007	<i>Religious Vocation & the Priesthood</i> Rev. Charles Willingham, O.Praem.

7:00 p.m. Meeting / Social

7:15 p.m. Conference begins

7:45 p.m. Conference ends with Questions & Answers

8:00 p.m. Night Prayer, Eucharistic Holy Hour, confession & vocational direction

9:05 p.m. Benediction

For more information:

St. Michael's Abbey • 19292 El Toro Road, Silverado 92676

(949) 858-0222 x333 • www.abbeynews.com • vocationdirector333@yahoo.com