



## It's All About Relationship

As we have continued well into the second year of our new experiment in ministry, one self-evident reality is increasingly clear: it all comes down to relationships! The investment in visiting regional campus ministries saw the first visit of vocation contacts over winter break. Our Advent Come and See retreat was full. Young men continue to come to the Abbey on their own after their initial visit with us. All of this momentum is a direct result of the sense of connection and belonging that individuals feel after having met members of the community. This is a testament to the hospitality, warmth, and welcome that we as a community manage to offer, even amidst all the various parts of our lives that are pulling our attention. The most significant fruit that we can see from our willingness to continue to have the openness to welcome those from the outside into our community life can be seen in the discernment of our postulant, Patricio.

The significance of hospitality and welcome that we offer is obvious in the explicitly vocational activities of our ministry, but it extends to the other activities as well. The broader outreach of our office—the Year of Mercy liturgies that were brought to a close in November, the evangelizing efforts of the Year of Mercy Art Exhibition and Café Communio, the Advent Young Adult Retreat, and Theology on Film Series, among other activities. These are not simply initiatives for their own sake. They are clear opportunities for the wider public and various segments of the population to come and encounter our life, and meet Norbertines—priests, deacons, brothers, oblates and associates—face to face.

I am very grateful for the members of the community (especially Br. Zac) who have not only welcomed individuals into the context of our cloister, but who have also ventured out to our larger events (most of which have been here at the Abbey) in order to offer a clear and visible presence of Norbertine identity in order that these relationships may continue to be built. The more people get to know us, the more our own vocation and life of discipleship may offer the chance to draw others closer to God and a deeper journey of faith—be that in relationship to us or in other contexts.



Visit with Norbertines from St. Michael's Abbey: Fr. Ambrose, Frater Urban & Frater John Paul. SEEK 2017.



"Norbertine Community of Santa Maria de la Vid Abbey" booth at SEEK 2017.



Fr. Graham as Spiritual Director of the Exodus90 Men's Group at the UNM Newman Center.

The opportunities to foster relationship to us not only as individuals or in the context of events and ministries, but collectively and communally as Norbertines, seems most easily and effectively achieved by means of the habit. It is the most easily identifiable way that one can present themselves as a member of something larger than themselves. In the context of faith-based events, when we are seen in habit (especially as our habit is becoming more recognizable within the Archdiocese), it is an easy and effective way to communicate our individual and



**Café Communio.**



**With dancers, Cheryl Villareal (left) and Adriana Sandoval (middle), featured on opening night of Year of Mercy Art Exhibition.**

## Where We've Been...

We have been quite busy since October of last year. We closed the month with a screening of the film, "The Human Experience" (2008) as part of our Theology on Film series, and assisted to bring in November with liturgies for All Souls' Day on Wednesday, November 2. These liturgies began with Solemn Vespers, followed by Holy Hour and Reconciliation, and ending with Mass. Also, following the Catholics on Call Conference at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago in August, Fr. Graham began meeting monthly with the four young adults who attended from the Archdiocese for time of theological reflection regarding the ministries in which they are each active. For one of our young adults, application of ideas learned from this time of theological reflection has begun in our own office.

Our Program and Communications Coordinator and now Catholics on Call alum, Celina Chavez, along with Fr. Graham went forward with a few new event ideas and firsts for the Abbey, hoping to further draw people together in community. In early November, we organized a formal opening for an art exhibition on the theme of "mercy in action" to close the Jubilee Year of Mercy, for which over 30 artists submitted visual artworks and two young dancers were featured. We thank God for his Spirit in moving over 100 people to come to the Abbey on opening night and in moving people to continue to visit throughout the course of the month-long exhibition. Before the closing of the art exhibition, we introduced a pop-up coffee house event called *Café Communio*. For this event, we worked in collaboration with the Archdiocese of Santa Fe Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministries to coordinate the services of three food trucks (Lily Marie's Coffee Co., Street Food Sensations and Atomic Age Bakery) and three musicians/groups, and to provide an environment available for socializing, studying for any students, and enjoyment.

As mentioned in our previous newsletter, we are very blessed to continue our close relationship with the Archdiocese's youth and young adult office! In addition to *Café Communio*, we planned a Young Adult Advent Retreat together, where 25 young adults gathered to reflect on signs from God, in Scripture and in their own lives. Fr. Graham and Celina were the featured speakers. We also continue to coordinate Taizé in the Desert services on the third Friday of each month.

We closed the year with a screening of the film, "He Named Me Malala" (2015) as part of our Theology on Film series, and joined in celebrating the Ordination to the Diaconate of Br. James and the Ordination to the Priesthood of Deacon Stephen! This year also began with celebration at the Archdiocese of Santa Fe 22nd Annual Young Adult Appreciation Banquet.. Fr. Graham served as presider for the evening's opening mass, Celina was recognized by Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Catholic Community, and Patricio Chacon and Adriana Sandoval were recognized by the Norbertine Community of Santa Maria de la Vid Abbey.

Aside from our work with the Archdiocese and within the Abbey, which included a "Young Men of Santa Maria de la Vid Abbey" Retreat in November and a Come and See Retreat in early December, Fr. Graham continued vocation work for the Norbertines at Benedictine College, Texas A & M, as well as at this year's SEEK Conference in San Antonio, TX.

## Upcoming Events

### January

- 27-29 Confirmation Retreat, Immaculate Conception, Las Vegas

### February

- 9 Catholic Corner^
- 10-12 Ft. Lewis College Visit
- 17 Taizé in the Desert^
- 22 Theology on Film\*
- 25 San Martin de Pores Confirmation Retreat

### March

- 3-5 Come and See Retreat
- 6-8 Mission, Cathedral Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi
- 11 Catholic Connection-Young Adult Women's Lenten Retreat^
- 17 Taizé in the Desert^
- 24-26 Search for Christian Maturity Retreat

### April

- 1 Catholic Connection-Young Adult Men's Lenten Retreat
- 7 Christ in the Community (1st Friday Fractal)^
- 21 Taizé in the Desert^
- 22 Chama Catechist Retreat
- 24 Catholic Corner^
- 26 Theology on Film\*

### May

- 7 Christ in the Community (Rail Yards)^
- 12 Café Communio (@ Holy Rosary)^
- 19 Taizé in the Desert^
- 31 Theology on Film\*

### June

- 10 Catholic Connection-Young Adult Transitions Retreat^
- 16 Taizé in the Desert (Anniversary)^
- 28 Theology on Film\*

\*proprietary programming

^collaboration with the Archdiocese

## New Norbertine Postulant

On December 4, "we welcomed Patricio Chacón as a postulant of our community. He will continue his studies as a college student while living the rhythm of life of the Abbey and formally enter a process of discernment toward our way of life. Please keep Patricio and our community in your prayers as he deepens his discernment in seeking to follow the will of God. Please pray for all those in discernment, and for vocations to our small community here in New Mexico. Blessed be God for all the blessings he bestows on our Abbey!" (Source: Facebook)



Fr. Graham (left) and Patricio Chacón (middle) with Abbot Joel (right).

## Where We're Going...

We have much planned for this year as we hope to provide opportunities for young adults and others to deepen their faith in and relationships with God and with one another. In collaboration with the Archdiocese of Santa Fe Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministries, which attests to our trust in and value of relationships and collaborative efforts to further the Kingdom, we are preparing for events of the theological, informative, "question and answer" nature as *Catholic Chat* and *Catholic Corner*, as well as those of a social nature as *Christ in the Community* and *Café Communio* (a pop-up coffee house experience). We also have four young adult retreats planned (Women's and Men's Lenten retreats, one Summer Transitions retreat, and one Advent retreat). We trust that these retreats not only invite young adults to explore their own sense of identity and vocation in Christ, but also to be present to the Norbertine way of life and charism while here and going forth.

Additionally, we will continue our Theology on Film series on the last Wednesday of each month, apart from March as a Lenten observance. A big thank you to Br. Zac for taking leadership over this series! We will continue vocations work with a few Come and See retreats at the Abbey as well as by way of Norbertine support and representation within college campuses, parishes, missions and other groups. We remain blessed by the power of invitation, those extended and received, as Fr. Graham has been asked to be the spiritual director for an Exodus90 Young Men's Spirituality Group involving many of the young men who often come to events and retreats at the Abbey as well as others from the Newman Center and Emmaus Journey.



"Young Men of Santa Maria de la Vid Abbey".  
Retreat

group identity. Although it can often be uncomfortable or seem cumbersome, I believe from my own experiences and observations that the use of the habit in the context of Archdiocesan events and other public religious gatherings (including those of the clergy) has a profound ability for us to build relationships with the wider community as us broadly as Norbertines. For although relationships are fundamentally individual, one person to another, they only hold a value in connecting people to the spirit and charism of our life if the relationships others share with us individually point them to the relationships which they can hold with us collectively.

Building on the experience that we have gained over the past year and a half of this ministry, we are continuing our three-fold movement of outreach and evangelization, formation in faith and spirituality, and the calling forth of disciples. We hope to continue to build on the relationships fostered with the Archdiocese Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministries. Many of our outreach efforts (Christ in the Community, Café Communio, Catholic Chat, Catholic Corner, and Catholic Connection Retreats) will come under the larger heading “C-Squared: Magnifying Christ in our World.” We are in the process of seeking additional funding to increase these community engagement initiatives.

We also continue to solidify our relationships with campus ministries, as we hope to expand to colleges in Colorado, Arizona, Oklahoma, and more in Kansas and Texas in the coming semesters. We have also begun an initiative to market the abbey as a service learning/mission trip destination for campus ministries and young adult groups around the country who wish to come and serve in New Mexico for a time. This is one of the anticipated outgrowths of the presence we had at the Fellowship of Catholic University Students Seek2017 Conference in San Antonio. Seek2017 gave us an opportunity to gain some national visibility as a community, and the attendance of Br. Zac and Patricio heightened this visibility in such a large gathering. It also afforded Patricio the opportunity to connect with energetic young Catholics his own age.

As I am no longer on the pastoral team at Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary, I hope that my more open liturgical schedule will allow me to engage more intentionally in a presence to parishes outside of our ministerial oversight and continue (along with Fr. Geno and Abbot Joel) to allow other communities throughout the Archdiocese to see and meet a Norbertine. I also hope to continue to support evangelization and discipleship ministries like Emmaus Journey and grow in deeper, more active collaboration with them.

We must remember that it is not the programming that inspires people in their journey of faith, but the relationships that are forged through it. All of our efforts are only as successful as the lives that are touched one person to another. As we draw people into the Abbey, and as we go forth to meet them, the best asset that we have as a community to live out our call as modern day Apostles sent by the Risen Christ is ourselves. The spirit-led success of our ministry to date points to this reality. I am grateful for the engagement that the community has offered to this point, and am hopeful for a continued and deepened presence of us as individuals, and collectively as a community, amidst those whom we seek to serve. When we live out our life in that way, it is evident that hearts are drawn to us and to the life which we share. When we share our life with others, they desire to share life with us.



Sign of Grace-Young Adult Advent Retreat.



Discussion facilitated by Br. Zac at Theology on Film: The Human Experience.



22nd Annual Young Adult Appreciation Banquet award recipients from the Abbey and Holy Rosary.

Our hope and mission is to support the increase of the young adult presence in the community and the bridging of gaps to the larger faith community. Any and all Norbertines are welcome to observe and/or assist with any of these events and ideas.