



Prayer: An Invitation

By Fr. Graham Golden



Christ in the Community: NM Museum of Natural History & Science, Scriptural Stations of the Cross prayer reflection before the Fractals Rock Show

I think it took a year of Geno asking me in mentorship meetings “so have you taken that to prayer?” before I realized how powerful prayer actually is above and beyond sheer effort alone. It should have seemed obvious to a vocations director, “your ministry is to seek and follow the will of God!” It took a while for that to really sink in.

As I look over the successes of our ministry these last months, I not only see the many hours of work, activity, and resources expended, but I also see the guiding movement of the Holy Spirit. Just under two years ago the community took a huge gamble in investing resources, time, and energy in this ministerial endeavor—a ministry primarily focused on accompanying young people as they journey toward Christ, not on vocational recruitment. From that spirit-led moment to now we have continued to take significant risks by re-imagining our formation process and entrance requirements. At each step of this journey I continue to stand at once in uncertainty and consolation as I see fruits born

that no amount of will-power could bring about.

This is not simply the growth in the number and quality of men in formation and discernment, or the expanding activities and now well-established and respected programming, support, and consultation services we offer, or the ever-growing relationships with campus ministries, and heightened regional visibility. This is a statement to the fact that we are living our core identity and charism well, and that by investing more in who we are here at the Abbey as a community striving to be “of one heart and one mind on our way into God,” we can know more deeply the movement of the Spirit, be more rooted in Christ, and thus witness the birth of more fruit in service to God’s Kingdom.



We have been stretched and challenged as individuals and as a community as we have walked at the same moment both with Fran in his final months and with Patricio, Edgar, and others in discernment as they begin their journey in consecrated life. These experiences testify most strongly, I believe, to the clear movement and momentum of the Holy Spirit within our community. In both these instances we have not only sought God alongside these men—young and old—but have allowed them to show us God as they walk alongside each one of us. We have certainly grown in our mutual listening.

“You are more than just a fraternity of guys living together. I know what that’s like from college. You are seeking Christ, and that is what makes this kind of relationship different...that’s what makes me think I could do this for life.”

These are the words of a serious discerner after having spent several days with us at the Abbey. In our last newsletter we emphasized the importance of relationship, of engagement, and of presence to one another and to those who desire to journey with us in their discernment. If these last months have shown me anything it is the reality that what makes a life and enterprise like ours different from other paths one could take in the world is precisely the bond we share—not just in conversation, not just in time spent together, and not just in common activities—but in our common journey into God. Our life of prayer, both our communal liturgical prayer and our private prayer lives, is the central defining aspect of our identity—not only as a community seeking God and desiring to share God, but in what forms and solidifies our relationships to one another and to those who may wish to participate in our life. Without this, nothing else has focus, direction, purpose, and most importantly openness to the movement of God.

Fran would so eloquently speak of the underground stream in this place, the deep wells of spiritual nourishment that can be found here. This is a reality that we do not control, but that we have been given to steward. Beyond all else, then, our own spiritual lives—our prayer, our contemplation, and our liturgy, become what we have to give and have allowed us to be so attentive and responsive to God’s movement here.

Where We've Been...

As we approach the summer months of the year, we can't help but feel grateful for all that God has encouraged and blessed our office to do for the furthering of his Kingdom, over the past year and in the past five months. In February, we were able to launch a movement which has been growing since our collaboration with the Archdiocese of Santa Fe Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministries began, called *C² Young Adult Ministry*. As the name suggests, each of the events and retreats under this movement are identified by two words primarily, each beginning with a letter "C." Within this launch, we brought back and refined an event called Catholic Corner in which young adults could feel free to ask questions of priests, deacons, and/or religious brothers and sisters. While it began as an event taking place in a restaurant or designated location, we decided to bring it back as something that anyone and everyone could be involved in, without having to worry about being physically present at a certain spot in the city. Using Facebook Live (a means of streaming a video in 'real time' on a community Facebook page), we streamed a Catholic Corner session from the Cathedral Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi in Santa Fe featuring Fr. Graham. Since the video streamed live in February, Facebook records show that it has been viewed over 2500 times! We did another Catholic Corner in April with Fr. Leon Vigil (recently assigned to Immaculate Conception in Las Vegas, NM), which has also been well-viewed. We are thankful as we have received quite a bit of positive feedback from people and young adults especially in beginning to utilize social media for this and other events. To promote Catholic Corner, we also began recording short rapid-fire question-and-answer video sessions with some of the religious in the Archdiocese, including some of our Norbertines, also through Facebook Live. Among the other ways we have made use of social media—Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube specifically—is in doing something called "Carpool Karaoke," a trending activity for celebrities and young adults to show a 'lighter' side of a situation or of the personality of a person of interest. Our particular purpose for doing this with some of our religious in the Archdiocese was to show a side of them that people do not often see, a playful and relatable side.

On a traditional note, our young adult retreats continue to encourage physical, emotional, mental and spiritual presence in a place away from the normal ambiance of everyday life, the Abbey. Placing these retreats under *C² Young Adult Ministry*, we have given them a new name as a group: Catholic Connection retreats. In March, we were blessed to have two young adult Catholic Connection Lenten retreats, one for women and one for men. Both were well-attended and gave special attention to the Stations of the Cross and to time in community. To foster the importance of time in community, we also facilitated a few Christ in the Community events, one in April at the New Mexico Museum of Natural History & Science and one at the Albuquerque Rail Yards Market. It has been inspiring to see the involvement of our faith community within our surrounding Albuquerque community, to be true witnesses of Christ's love and goodness in a world that seems to be more and more divided. Our most recent effort towards community was hosted by Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Catholic Community. We along with the parish opened the pop-up coffee house experience, Café Communio (first introduced at the Abbey in December), to support three local food truck businesses, the music ministry of some ministers in the Archdiocese as well as of the Franciscan order, and the drawing of people toward time spent with one another.

As we do want to encourage people and young adults especially toward prayer, to be intentional and present to it, we make an effort to invite everyone to join in Taizé in the Desert every third Friday of each month. So far this year, we have had wonderful participation, and we are hopeful that God continues to move Catholics and people of all faiths to join in this time of communal prayer.



Catholic Connection Young Women's Lenten retreat, faith-sharing.



Catholic Connection Young Men's Lenten retreat, cross-building.

Vocations

While Fr. Graham's efforts for vocations have taken him to Fort Lewis College in Colorado, Pittsburg State University in Kansas, and Stanford University in California since early February, we rejoice in what God has done through him right here in Albuquerque. Our last office newsletter welcomed Patricio Chacón as a Postulant in the Norbertine Community, and following recent discussions and prayer, we happily share that he has been invited to apply for the Novitiate. With this wonderful news, we also celebrate the Postulancy of Edgar Romero-Ramos and preparations toward simple vows for Br. Zac on the Solemnity of St. Augustine. We invite you to join us in prayer for the discernment and formation of these three young men, and, with a Come & See Retreat approaching at the end of May, we ask for prayer for the continued growth and ministry of our community.



Edgar, Patricio, Fr. Graham and Br. Zac with Santa Maria de la Vid.

Where We're Going...

Next month, we will be having another Catholic Connection Retreat for young men and women under the theme, "Catholic Life Crisis." This theme is inspired by the relationship between our constant need for conversion and the constant temptation of doubt. Other subthemes will include "uniting in community and prayer" and "viewing our life journeys as pilgrimages." With Fr. Fran in our thoughts and prayers, we plan to refer to his story, *The Rabbi's Gift*, introducing the simple yet enlightening themes he presents on Christ's presence among us to the young adults who take part in this retreat. In the week following this retreat, we will also celebrate Taizé in the Desert's five-year anniversary in the Archdiocese of Santa Fe. This celebration will include the prayer service at 7:30 pm and a social in the Our Lady of Guadalupe Commons after the service. All are invited to join us. To close the month, we will continue our Theology on Film series. We had a room full of people at our last Theology on Film in April where we viewed *Bless Me, Última* (2013). The discussion that took place about the film was encouraging as people shared how it moved them more towards openness and pride in our New Mexican culture.

The coming months will include a few more Christ in the Community events, one at Isotopes' Park for their annual "All Faiths' Night" during summer and one in Old Town for the "Old Town Holiday Stroll" in December. Additionally, we have two more Café Communios scheduled, and, as one of them is set to take place at the Abbey, we plan to couple this event with an art exhibition opening on the theme of "journey." We will have more details about this soon.

Along with a few Catholic Chat sessions about current events and issues, a Catholic Connection Young Adult Advent retreat, our participation in a young adult symposium for the Archdiocese, and other events, we hope to continue to engage young adults that they might take interest in their faith and in God's will for their lives.

As a special request, please keep Fr. Graham and Patricio in your prayers as they participate in this year's Pilgrimage for Vocations in June. And please keep our office in your prayers as we continue to grow, and as we continue working to support and encourage the Norbertine way of life and charism.

Upcoming Events

May

- 26-28 Come & See Retreat*

June

- 4-10 Pilgrimage for Vocations
- 10 Catholic Connection Young Adult Retreat - "Catholic Life Crisis" ^
- 16 Taizé in the Desert Five-Year Anniversary ^
- 28 Theology on Film*

July

- 21 Taizé in the Desert ^
- 30 Christ in the Community-Isotopes' Park ^

August

- 5 ASF Young Adult Symposium
- 11 Café Communio ^
- 18 Taizé in the Desert ^
- 28 Solemnity of St. Augustine
- 30 Theology on Film*

September

- 15 Taizé in the Desert ^

October

- 17 Catholic Chat ^
- 20 Taizé in the Desert ^
- 25 Theology on Film*

November

- 3 Café Communio ^ / "Journey" Art Exhibition Opening*
- 14 Catholic Chat ^
- 17 Taizé in the Desert ^

December

- 1 Christ in the Community-Old Town Holiday Stroll ^
- 2 Catholic Connection Young Adult Advent Retreat ^
- 15 Taizé in the Desert ^ / Advent Retreat Follow-up ^

*proprietary programming

^collaboration with the Archdiocese

The most significant task we can undertake for our ministries in Christian discipleship and religious vocation is the very thing that continues to keep our hearts and minds open to hear the true depths of our own identity: who we are in God and who we are in one another. As Fran reminded us before his passing, the language of God is friendship. To listen to this language, of course, we must foster our relationships but as we know those relationships are rooted in the common bond we share in our baptism and the covenantal bond we share in our life together in this place.

The power of our relationships and witness as a community only have prophetic value when rooted in prayer for one another, for those among whom we minister, and for those we trust God will continue to bring to our community. I ask that you continue to pray for vocations to our community, for our men in discernment, for our men in formation, and for our ministries. I ask that we continue to pray for one another. I challenge us all to continue to reach out putting this prayer into practice as we forge new relationships with these younger men who have come to us seeking to both find and share Christ together.

Triune God of unity and peace,
We give you thanks and praise
for the gift of our Abbey
and for the life to which we have been called.

Through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Lady of the Vine,

St. Norbert, & St. Augustine,
May our call to live this journey together be deepened,
and may we be drawn ever more closely to the heart of Jesus Christ
as we are brought closer to one another.

Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit,
May the authenticity of life which we live
be a spark of your love in this world,
and may this witness motivate others to
seek Christ here with, in, and through our community.

May those discerning a call to this life
be given the strength and courage to persevere
in seeking their deepest desires,
so that your grace may continue to move through us
for many generations to come,
so that those in darkness may know your saving light.

We ask this in your holy name, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
Amen.



Carpool Karaoke—Religious Style



Theology on Film: Bless Me, Última.



Café Communio at Our Lady of the Most 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.