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ABOUT THE NORBERTINES

The importance of the Norbertines has been largely forgotten in parts of Western Europe and is practically unknown in the United States. Founded in 1121, they are older than the Jesuits, Franciscans, Dominicans or Servites. The motto of their Order, taken from St. Paul's admonition to young bishops, *Ad omne bonum opus parati* – Prepared for every good work – expresses well the variety of apostolates Norbertines may engage. Because the Order is so ancient, its apostolic expression is eminently adaptable. Norbertines are involved in activities as varied as teaching, retreat work, missionary work, parish ministry and publishing. Nearly any apostolate is possible, provided the work does not hinder us from attending the Choir Office and Mass, which are the essential marks of a Canon Regular.

The buildings and style of an abbey seek to incarnate a philosophy of life that allows for a serene unfolding of the Canons' daily round of prayers and liturgy, as well as providing for a common roof and table. Norbertines, by their nature, live together, pray together and take meals together. The initials O. Praem. after each confrere's name is an abbreviation of the Latin title of this Order – *Ordinis Praemonstratensis* – of the order of Prémontré, from the location of the founding house: Prémontré, France. Hundreds of Norbertines have distinguished themselves through the centuries for their holiness. Eleven have been canonized and five beatified, the most recent being James Francis Kern (1897-1924) of Austria. He was beatified on June 21, 1998 by Pope John Paul II.

Abbeys of the Norbertine Order are autonomous, thus St. Michael's is under the governance of its Abbot (Abbot Eugene Hayes), who is assisted in his service of the community by the members of his council. The canonry has 47 priests and 22 members at other stages of formation, preparing for the priesthood. All the confreres, five of whom are retired, live a full priestly and monastic common life; with daily attendance at the choral office in the abbey church (hours of sung prayers throughout the day and evening); common residence; meals taken in common; and life in community. The abbey's principal apostolate is their high school (St. Michael's Preparatory School). Confreres also provide Sunday ministry at 33 parishes and institutions in the diocese of Orange and four other dioceses. They teach in seven schools – from elementary to college level – throughout the Orange and Los Angeles dioceses.

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ST. MICHAEL'S ABBEY

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