



The Right Reverend Eugene J. Hayes, O.Praem., J.C.D.

Abbot

St. Michael's Abbey of the Norbertine Fathers

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Over sixty years ago, Fr. Abbot Ladislav Parker and six other Norbertine priests fled Communist persecution in Hungary and came to the United States. At that time, they could never have imagined all the blessings God had in store for them in the coming years. They courageously followed the Holy Spirit's inspiration and took a step forward, and then another step, and then another...

Soon God would lead them to Orange County, California, where they would teach at Mater Dei High School and assist in the surrounding parishes. Eventually, they would establish a novitiate and seminary on El Toro Road. Due to numerous factors during the tumultuous 1960s, they were unable to sustain the seminary, which soon transitioned to a preparatory school for grades 9-12. Over the years, the seeds which our founding fathers planted have grown and borne much fruit. Our community now has over 80 members, and we are involved in numerous different active apostolates, including many parishes, grade schools and high schools, various chaplaincies at hospitals, universities, and nursing homes, leading retreats, and much more. God indeed has blessed our community, and for this we are most grateful to Him and to all our friends and benefactors who help make this possible.

Once again, God is asking us to take another step forward. As we look ahead to life at our new location and discern His will for us, we return to our founders' original vision by renewing our emphasis on priestly formation of our own candidates. To do so, we must devote additional attention to meet the needs of the 40 seminarians entrusted to our care as they discern God's call to religious life and the priesthood. Additionally, the operational difficulties of managing two sites will diminish the high standards of faith, academics, and character we hold high. In light of these and other logistical issues, we will be closing the doors of our preparatory high school at the end of the 2019-2020 school year for the foreseeable future.

While this is an unfortunate decision, we believe this is the hand of God leading us forward once again. The founder of our Order, St. Norbert, was a great reformer of the clergy. It is by his example and through his inspiration that we wish to do our part, imperfect though we ourselves are, in helping form men for the priesthood, especially in these times when the Church is suffering so many challenges. This transition will allow us to serve better the Catholic mission in schools and parishes throughout Southern California, and increasingly, the world.

Thank you, dear friends, for your continued support and prayers, as we take another step forward.

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