

## **General information concerning the Norbertine Lay Order of St. Michael's Abbey**

Thank you for your interest in learning more about the Norbertine Lay Order of Saint Michael's Abbey in Silverado, CA. Here is some general information concerning it.

Should you be interested in learning more about becoming a member, simply email [LayOrder@StMichaelsAbbey.com](mailto:LayOrder@StMichaelsAbbey.com) requesting to speak with the director (leaving an email address and/or phone number) who will contact you. Should you wish to continue, you will receive an application form.

Members of the Lay Order are Catholics who commit themselves to strive for Christian perfection, as well as partake, in various ways, the bringing of others to obtaining it as well. They are inspired by the canonical tradition which is lived out in the Order of Canons Regular of Prémontré (more commonly known as the Norbertines), as well as are instructed and guided by members of that order. In summary, the Lay Order seeks communion with God and with each other in God, the two greatest commandments.

Members of the Lay Order seek to share with others what they themselves gain as sons and daughters of St. Norbert. They freely offer their spiritual and material assistance to the Canonry of St. Michael. The community of St. Michael in turn provides members of the Lay Order with spiritual care and fraternal charity in such a manner that they form one flock and one shepherd in the service of God and others in imitation of St. Norbert. All members share in the spiritual graces of the canonry to which they belong, i.e. St. Michael's Abbey.

The Abbot (the superior of the Abbey) is the spiritual father of the Lay Order, whom the members regard as a spiritual father. He appoints a professed religious member of the Abbey to serve as the director of the Lay Order. The director provides all communication, instruction, and leadership.

The members attend monthly meetings (in general, every third Sunday), as well as are offered two days of recollection a year. Following a set format, they are to develop a personal rule of life which is in harmony with Norbertine spirituality, being assisted and guided in doing so by the formation program (which is a minimum of two years).

## **Formation in the Lay Order consists of three stages:**

1. AFFILIATE FORMATION – Before entrance into the novitiate, one is affiliated with the Lay Order for a set period of time, attending the formation classes which are required for discerning a vocation to the Lay Order. One thus begins growing in understanding and practice what a vocation to the lay order is, to develop Norbertine spirituality and way of life, and finally to gain a spiritual bond with St. Michael's abbey.

2. NOVITIATE FORMATION – Begins once one receives the small white scapular (a ceremony in the church which officially begins the Novitiate). The affiliate and novitiate formation together make up a period of two years, should all the classes be faithfully attended. If with legitimate reason one is absent from a class, it must be made up for before any profession can be made (thus sometimes the time of formation may be longer than two years). The classes (and meetings of the lay order in general) are from September to May inclusive. At this time of formation, one is to discern definitively having a vocation to the lay order, while each member's version of the rule must be approved by the director before profession is approved. The profession ceremony takes place in the Church of the Ascension of St. Michael's Abbey.

3. ONGOING FORMATION – Begins with profession and continues throughout life. One is expected to be faithful to the rule, while the director can be approached should any questions arise concerning it. This will foster both spiritual growth and one's bond with St. Michael's Abbey, the end of which is obtaining union with God - in becoming saints.

## **A summary of Norbertine spirituality, upon which the way of life is based:**

1. Adoration of the most Holy Eucharist
2. True devotion to Mary
3. Lives of prayer - of which the Divine Office has a key part
4. Penance (proper forms of prayer and sacrifice)
5. Mission - zeal for souls

This is a rather brief summary of the spirituality of the Norbertine order, as well as how people from various ways of life are able to partake in it. For further information, please use the email address given above. May God bless you!

Br Mark Charlesworth, O.Praem.

Director

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