

*So Many Questions!  
Exploring Institutional Vocation  
Deb Nejedlo  
Program of Faith, Learning and Vocation*

**T**his past June I attended the Faith, Learning and Vocation (FLV) Summer Retreat-Seminar II on Institutional Vocation where we learned about St. Norbert and the Norbertines and were asked to consider the College's vocation. Does it have one? And if so, what is it?

Working in FLV the past six years, as well as attending the first retreat seminar on personal vocation, I have come to speak and understand the language of vocation. A personal vocation involves identifying your gifts and seeking out a place where those gifts can be put to work meeting the needs of others . . . making the world a better place. I came to understand that the position I hold as secretary in the Program of Faith, Learning and Vocation at St. Norbert College is not my vocation, it is my occupation, a job that I go to. But the opportunities that I take to listen to a student or a colleague, to perhaps probe with a question or offer a suggestion, to offer support or encouragement or even to give a hug or share a laugh – this is where I practice my vocation at St. Norbert College.

My personal understanding of vocation has grown, but how can I understand the College's vocation? SNC is gifted with strong community, generous hospitality, a commitment to service, and the presence of talented and knowledgeable faculty and staff members. However, just as with personal vocation, our work does not stop at identifying our gifts but asks how we can use them in service to others. How and where do we use our gifts to meet the world's needs? Is our institutional vocation limited to this campus? Does it stop at the De Pere city limits or does our vocation encompass the needs of the world?

An institutional vocation should be reflected in the Mission Statement of that organization – the public definition that tells the world what that group is about and where they excel. "A good mission

statement should accurately explain why an organization exists and what it hopes to achieve. It articulates an organization's essential nature, its values and its works" (Janel M. Radke).

Let's consider that mission statement.

*St. Norbert College is a Catholic liberal arts college embracing the Norbertine tradition of community and is committed to providing an educational environment that is intellectually, spiritually and personally challenging.*

*Consistent with our set of core values, students will develop skills in critical and analytical thought, quantification, synthesis, problem solving and communication, and will learn to apply these as responsible citizens of a diverse, interdependent, changing world.*

*Students will identify, test and strengthen their moral convictions, act with personal integrity, develop meaningful personal goals and build relationships based on mutual respect.*

Our students are the reason we are here. How do we use our gifts to provide an educational environment that is intellectually, spiritually and personally challenging?

Intellectually, we teach and then challenge our students to master the objective skills mentioned above – critical and analytical thought, quantification, synthesis, problem solving and communication. We promise to provide them, if they are willing participants, with a top notch liberal arts education. Do we actively seek out those who may be struggling? Do we act fairly while holding them accountable as the responsible adults we hope they

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become?

Are we personally challenging our students? We are outstanding teachers in the classroom or out of the classroom as our position here dictates. But do we seek out other, everyday opportunities to mentor our students? Does this community actively encourage our students to become responsible citizens with moral convictions and personal integrity? Do we model this ideal? Do we send them out into the world with meaningful personal goals? Can they build relationships based on mutual respect? As fellow community members we should teach by our lived example.

Hospitality and service are important Norbertine traditions. From the beginning, Norbertine communities saw to the medical needs of the areas in which they were located and also welcomed and cared for travelers. Do we show our best hospitality to those who visit or ask for our help? As part of their educational experience here, our students are encouraged to engage in service at just about every turn! Service is not just that winter or spring break service trip. Service should be a transformative experience that is mutually beneficial and promotes social justice and the common good. Are we, as a community, personally challenged to engage in service? Do we provide service to help meet the needs of others? Should we?

We have promised our students will be spiritu-

ally challenged. Our students need to find their own spiritual path. We are not all Catholic, nor do we need to be. While SNC's Catholic and Norbertine traditions should be recognized and honored, this campus should be a place where students ask the hard questions. It needs to be a safe place for them to find their own answers and know that they are respected. Do we as community members support their journeys? Are we active, non-judgmental conversation partners as they try to find their way?

Vocation, especially institutional vocation, is not one person's question to ask or one person's question to answer. How might we engage the question together? I encourage you to enter this conversation. . . ask some of your own questions; voice your thoughts on the institutional vocation of St. Norbert College. By simply being an active part of our community we not only meet each others' needs for just that – community, we each have an opportunity to work together to transform this campus community, the local community and the world.

*Added note:* The Program of Faith, Learning and Vocation will offer Summer Retreat-Seminar II on Institutional Vocation again this summer, June 23 - 25. Please watch our website for more information [www.snc.edu/vocation](http://www.snc.edu/vocation) or just give me a call at 403-3155.

## LOOK WHAT WE'RE UP TO!

ALIVE Team Intern Applications due: Wednesday,  
February 27, 2008

Alumni Retreat on Vocation, in Two Acts  
Participants are welcome to register for Act One only,  
Act Two only, or the whole play!

- Act 1: February 29 – March 1, 2008;
- Act 2: March 1 – March 2, 2008

The Norbertine Center for Spirituality, St. Norbert Abbey.

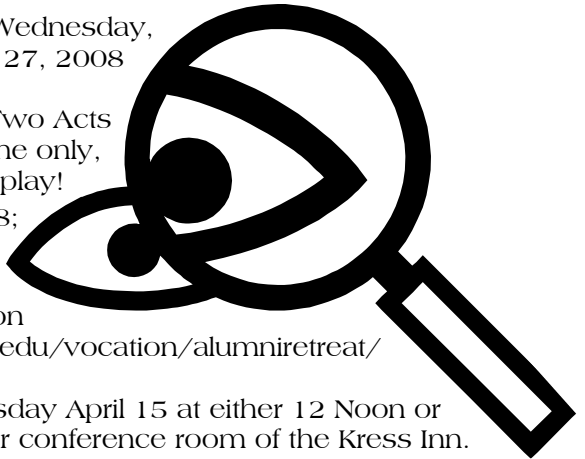
Please watch our website for registration information

<http://www.snc.edu/vocation/alumniretreat/>

Spring Book discussion—Tuesday April 15 at either 12 Noon or  
3:30 PM in the first floor conference room of the Kress Inn.  
The selection is Edward Beck's *Soul Provider: Spiritual Steps to Limitless Love*  
Please register at [http://www.snc.edu/vocation/development/  
bookdiscussion/registration.html](http://www.snc.edu/vocation/development/bookdiscussion/registration.html)

Summer Retreat-Seminar 2 — June 23 -25, 2008 —  
The Norbertine Center for Spirituality, St. Norbert Abbey.

The Program of Faith, Learning, and Vocation will host a conference  
for all Catholic Schools who have received grants from Programs for the  
Theological Exploration of Vocation (PTEV), an initiative of Lily Endowment Inc.  
Please watch here for details.





## Spring 2008 Book Discussion Edward Beck's *Soul Provider* Paul Wadell Professor of Religious Studies

The book chosen for the Spring 2008 Faculty-Staff Book Discussion is Edward Beck's recently published *Soul Provider: Spiritual Steps to Limitless Love*. The book is a modern reinterpretation of the spiritual classic *The Ladder of Ascent*, written early in the seventh century by John Climacus, abbot of St. Catherine's Monastery in the Sinai Peninsula, to help his fellow monks make progress in the spiritual life. In Climacus's account, each rung of the ladder represents either a vice to overcome or a virtue to acquire as a "pilgrim" makes his or her way to God. Although Beck initially wondered "how a seventh-century text written for desert monks could retain its relevancy" for today, he soon realized that in *The Ladder of Ascent* one encounters "vices and demons" with which we all struggle, and virtues that not only will help us overcome them, but also help us live healthier and holier lives.

In chapters explaining topics such as renunciation, detachment, sorrow, fear, anger, greed, falsehood, and insensitivity, on the one hand; and simplicity, humility, discernment, and love, on the other, Beck helps us confront those things about ourselves that can harm and diminish us (as well as those with whom we live), and points us to the kinds of habits and practices that can make us more human and, therefore, freer and happier.

*Soul Provider* can be an unsettling book because it challenges us to be honest about ourselves—to probe our desires and longings, our attachments, resentments, and fears. But it is also an immensely hopeful book because it consistently reminds us that at the top of the ladder is a limitless love that beckons us forward and accepts us much more than we ordinarily accept ourselves. Written in a warm and engaging style, and filled with stories and practical examples, *Soul Provider* is an extended invitation to reflect on how we live and what we have come to consider important. Moreover, it is an insightful critique of many of the things to which our society encourages us to aspire. Like its seventh-century predecessor, to take up *Soul Provider* is to begin a journey that has

the potential to change one. As Beck counsels, "Take your time on this climb...Climb, walk, sit, stand, kneel, or do somersaults; I'm not sure it much matters. The structure is simply a means to an end: union with God, the source of all love. Get there however you can."

Please join us on Tuesday, April 15 for the spring faculty & staff book discussion of *Soul Provider*. Discussions will be held at 12 Noon and 3:30 PM in the first floor conference room of the Kress Inn. To receive your copy of *Soul Provider* or if you have your own copy of the book and would like to attend, please register at <http://www.snc.edu/vocation/development/bookdiscussion/registration.html> or contact Debi Nejedlo at x3155 or [debi.nejedlo@snc.edu](mailto:debi.nejedlo@snc.edu)

If you have a suggestion for a future book discussion selection, please contact Paul Wadell at [paul.wadell@snc.edu](mailto:paul.wadell@snc.edu) or at 403-3084.



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## Get Involved in what God is Doing

Billy Korinko '09

Religious Studies Major

Women's and Gender Studies Minor

*Billy Korinko, an FLV Ministry Intern serving at Notre Dame Academy in Green Bay, writes of his experiences with the community of Sant'Egidio.*

We came from far and wide: Italy, Rwanda, New York, Massachusetts, Ohio, Minnesota, Tennessee, Indiana, and Wisconsin. Along with members of the Community of Sant'Egidio from all over the nation and globe I traveled to Boston College to join in a reflection on the call of that community. Sant'Egidio began in 1968 after a group of teenage Catholics in Rome decided to join together to read the Gospels and befriend the poor. This gesture sparked a global movement that is now the Community of Sant'Egidio. Sant'Egidio is best known for its peace negotiations in the early nineties in Mozambique. In addition, Sant'Egidio has created the D.R.E.A.M Program (Drug Resource Enhancement against AIDS and Malnutrition) to combat AIDS in Africa. This has proven to be an extremely effective program, but the center of all Sant'Egidio's work remains prayer.

In our time together in Boston, our diverse group gathered in reflection and prayer and addressed ways that we can live out the Gospel call to serve the poor. With the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Sant'Egidio quickly approaching, Marco Impagliazzo, the president of the Community of Sant'Egidio offered a reflection about exodus. Impagliazzo not only reflected about the exodus story in scripture, but he challenged each of us to reflect on the ways that we can make a personal *exodus* from the things that hold us back in life. As the group reflected it became clear that the things that can hold us back are not always

inherently bad. At times we can so fill our lives with good things that we end up silencing God's true call to us. The weekend in Boston was an excellent opportunity to explore vocation by reflectively listening to where God is calling me. In this reflection I recalled that the poor's needs far exceed food and shelter; they need companionship. This reminded me of one of my favorite quotes from U2's Bono:

*And this wise man asked me to stop. He said, 'Stop asking God to bless what you're doing. Get involved in what God is doing – because it's already blessed.' Well, let's get involved in what God is doing. God, as I say, is always with the poor. That's what God is doing. That's what He's calling us to do.*

I believe this has never been truer. The poor are not only the homeless; they are the hungry, the sick, the elderly, the orphaned, and the lonely. It is for this reason that I am proud to do work with the Community of Sant'Egidio and hope that it can grow even stronger here at St. Norbert College.

\*\*If you are interested in finding out more about the Community of Sant'Egidio, visit [www.santegidio.org](http://www.santegidio.org) or if you would like to join in prayer or service to the elderly, come on Tuesdays at 7:15 p.m. at the Old St. Joseph's Oratory.



Please deliver to:



*Billy with Paolo Mancinelli, a member of the Community of Sant'Egidio.*