

Richly Rooted and Growing Stronger: The St. Norbert College Norbertine Identity Statement

The St. Norbert College community is the proud and grateful heir of a rich tradition. The college cherishes its roots in the 900-year history of a religious order founded to further the kingdom of God while examining, and sometimes challenging, the accepted values and customs of its time. In their relationship with the only Norbertine institution of higher education in the world, those who pass through this college find themselves uniquely called to both represent and further the order's tradition of life lived in community for the good of all.

The community of Jesus' disciples had at its heart an ideal: that all people should live in peace, holding all they have as gifts from their Creator, and sharing those gifts so that no one might live in need or be distracted from praising the Giver of every good gift. The disciples shared a common life, a *communio*, guided by the teaching and direction of the apostles. We dare to say that this ideal of social existence is God's plan for all humanity. (Acts 2:42-47 and 4:32)

The great thinker and shepherd of God's flock, St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430), set before his friends the apostolic life as the model for their living together in community. Their goal, and ultimately that of all peoples, was and is to seek God alone together in a unity of charity he described as being of one mind and heart. Augustine put into words directives that, when followed authentically, foster the virtues necessary for living the apostolic life. That text is the Rule of Augustine.

In the course of history, the ideal of the apostolic life was taken up by that charismatic man of God, Norbert of Xanten (ca. 1080-1134), under whose patronage this college seeks to carry on Augustine's model of life in common. Norbert's unique experience of conversion gave birth in his time to a community, the Order of Prémontré or Norbertines. Through the organizational genius of Norbert's disciple Hugh of Fosse, the order has preserved and carried forward Norbert's mission of reconciliation and peace. The nine-centuries-long tradition of the order, in harmony with the college's Catholic and liberal arts traditions, identifies us to ourselves, to the church and to society.

We express and shape our Norbertine identity by:

- A rootedness in the Roman Catholic faith and the traditions of the Order of Prémontré.

- A living relationship with the Order of Prémontré through the sponsorship of St. Norbert Abbey.
- Mutual care for one another, embodying Christ's example of loving service (*actio*).
- The formation and sustainment of deep and often lifelong friendships.
- A collaborative way of life, grounded in the value of *communio* and expressed in teaching and learning, in study and research, and in the generous sharing of our resources.
- A joyful generosity in offering and giving of ourselves to the local community (*stabilitas* and *localitas*) and to the wider world by sharing our gifts with those who look to us in their need.
- A commitment to seek to be ministers of peace and reconciliation in the spirit of St. Norbert.
- The practice of hospitality in the spirit of the Gospel and the Rule of St. Augustine, and in the urging of St. Norbert.

We are the inheritors of a rich tradition, a small but vital corporate member of the Body of Christ in service to the human family in our times, committed to using our study, research and other resources to preserving the earth — our common home; to be ministers of peace and reconciliation; and, ultimately, to be Creation's voice in praising the God who has rooted us in this place where we are called to teach by that example that is the test of authentic teaching.

We live and work together as we have for 900 years engaged continually in the transformative work of conversion, of seeking after God. As in the Acts of the Apostles, in the life of Augustine's monasteries and in the history of the order, no individual or community ever arrives at a perfect living out of the apostolic life, but faith-filled perseverance carries us forward in humility and trust in God's mercy.

Toward that end, we accept Augustine's directive that we see his Rule as a kind of mirror, which we hold up to ourselves and one another in order to discern where we fall short and where we have reason to give God thanks for the reception of those graces which are particular to our identity as inheritors of Norbertine tradition.

(Updated and approved by St. Norbert Abbey in its June Chapter, 2022.)

