



Family of the
Norbertine Sisters 2.



-St. Norbert at the building of the Abbeychurch in Prémontré- colour drawing from The codex from Wessenau Castle Zeil in Leutkirch/Algau

Family of the Norbertine Sisters 2.

Written by the different Communities of the Norbertine Sisters.

1134
NORBERTUS 875
2009



Zsámbék 2009.



-Participants at the General Chapter 2006 in Freising, Germany

VISION-MISSION –STATEMENT



Vision-Mission –Statement

„Drawn by our merciful and Triune God,
we are called as baptized
to follow the poor and risen Christ
in a radical and apostolic way of life
according to the Gospel, the Rule of Saint Augustine
and the charism of Saint Norbert
the Founder of our Praemonstratensian Order

Our way of life is marked by:
a lifelong seeking after God through fraternal Community
a never-ending conversion by giving ourselves to the church
of our profession in communion with the self-emptying of Christ
in imitation of Mary pondering God's Word
and in ceaseless prayer and service at the altar

From the choir and Altar we go to serve the human family in
a spirit of simplicity hospitality and reconciliation and peace
for the benefit of the Church and the world,
especially where Christ is found among the poor, the suffering
and among those, who do not know him.
We pray that what God's Spirit has begun in us
may be perfect in the day of Christ Jesus”

(General Chapter 2006 Freising)



-St Norbert pictured on a vestment- Brabant Circary

FOREWORD

The year 2009 will be very important for our Order and especially for our Norbertine Sisters. On June 6, 1134, the Wednesday after Pentecost of that year, the Archbishop Norbert, our Order's Institutor and Founder, died in Magdeburg. So this year 2009 we celebrate the 875th anniversary of his departure to the home of our Father in heaven. When Norbert died, the confreres, and notably his second follower, St. Evermode, who was always at his side and would later himself become a bishop, were standing around Norbert's deathbed, praying and weeping in deep sorrow and affliction at the loss of their father



-Abbot General-Thomas Handgrättinger

and animator, their Founder and inspirational example. A restless life had come to an end, an indefatigable, lifelong engagement in the service of the Church at all levels, throughout the whole of Europe, under diverse forms and by means of various activities. After his death a wonderful scent, a pleasant perfume, was diffused, causing the statement to be made: "Only one who has lived in a good way can die in such a favorable manner!" This year we will look to our Founder, his life, his work and his communicable spirituality; we will seek to discover what inspired and motivated him as a canon of St. Victor in Xanten, as "pauper Christi", as an itinerant preacher, as the Order's Founder and, finally, as archbishop of Magdeburg. Restless and fearless, he preached and worked for peace and reconciliation, for justice and righteousness. But in all that he sought to accomplish, his main goal and intent was to bring the good news of the Gospel of our salvation to the people, to his followers, and even into political affairs, including the political conflicts between the Emperor and the Pope. He sought the Lord and the Lord's will, and he worked and struggled in accord with this ultimate desire of his life. A later era expressed this concentration of Saint Norbert on the Lord through the symbol of the Eucharist—a chalice or a monstrance in his hand, caught up in this mystery himself, bearing witness to this divine presence and showing it to others. During this year also the second the second International Meeting of our Order's Sisters will take place in Mariengarde in the Netherlands. For more than fifty years there has been a dependent house of Norbertine Fathers in De Essen-burg founded by the abbey of Berne/Heeswijk, and which is still alive and well. For some years now, since June 6, 1992, a new Norbertine community has sprung up next to the confreres—a small community of women with the wish "to live as religious sharing prayer, life and possessions". Both communities are mutually supportive and inspire one another, coming together for prayers and meals, and working together in pastoral and teaching programs of their district. When all the representatives of our Sisters' communities and the members of our Order's Sisters Commission gather in De Essenburg in August 2009, then the special "spiritus loci" of this unique cooperation of religious, men and women together, will inspire and stir up the zeal of the participants in the

spirit of Saint Paul, whose 2000th anniversary we are also celebrating in this "Anno Paulino" 2008/9. Saint Paul wrote: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). With the publication of this new edition of the "Family of the Norbertine Sisters", I want to express my wish that all our communities of Sisters grow in this unity, firmly rooted in Christ and in a radical following of the Lord, striving to live the goodness and beauty of community life, centered in Christ, but radiating out into the people of God

through every good work, which we must be prepared and ready to carry out as Norbertines—Fathers and Sisters.

Rome, 17 February 2009, feast of St. Evermode

+ Thomas Handgrättinger

Abbot General

"As the various communities of Sisters introduce themselves in this book, we – the readers – should also be open, to see the diverse ways in which the communities are committed to the ideals of St. Augustine and St. Norbert. The Praemonstratensian Order (Norbertines) was established in 1121 by St. Norbert in Premontre, France and, from the beginning, his followers included both men and women. Over time, independent and autonomous communities of Sisters emerged from the double cloisters of Sisters and Brothers typical of those early days. The traditional form continued unbroken in the Netherlands, Spain and Poland over the centuries. In other regions such as the Czech and Slovak Republic, Hungary and recently in California, new forms of community developed. The reader's vision too must widen to appreciate the variety of traditions and characteristics that are developing and to recognise the world-wide extension of the Order of Sisters across America, Europe and Eastern Europe. We should also be open to an awareness of the different spiritual approaches, ranging from the contemplative to the more active charitable charism. The tradition of the Canons Regular has always centred on pastoral work – by caring for visitors who come to them and going out to undertake pastoral and charity work in the surrounding area.

And, you, dear readers of this book, should especially give heed to the following:

"I run the way of your commandments, for you have given me freedom of heart." (Psalm 119:32.)

(From the Foreword of the Abbot General, Thomas Handgrättinger written for the first edition of the "Family of the Norbertine Sisters" in 2006)

1. WHO ARE THE CANONS REGULAR?

The word canon comes from the Latin `canonicus`. It means a religious person, who is signed into the canon, i.e. the list of the membership of a community of priests. Later, canon also meant `rule of life`. The Canons Regular build a religious community, and live according to the Rule of Augustine. (8)

(THE RULE OF SAINT AUGUSTINE):

1. Let us love God above all things dearest Brothers and love our neighbour, for these are the chief commandments given to us. These are the precepts which we order you who live in the monastery to observe.
2. The first purpose for which you have come together is to live in unity in the house and to be of one mind and one heart on the way to God.

They have 3 vows: poverty, chastity and obedience. They are different from the monks who were earlier `leaving the world` i.e. going out of the world, because they always live among the people and evangelize them, and so perform pastoral work. That is their main task.



-Rule of St. Augustine, from the Sintram codex, Marbach, 12. century, National Library Strassburg

2. SAINT NORBERT AND THE PREMONSTRATENSIAN ORDER

St Norbert was born of noble parents around the year 1080 in Xanten (northern Rhineland). As the second son of the Lord of Gennepe, he became a Canon of Xanten. He made a comfortable income from this, but he did not sing the office; he asked somebody else to do it. He was very talented, so Emperor Henry V soon recognized Norbert's gifts and charm and called him into his personal service at the imperial court. In the year 1115 Norbert was thrown from his horse by a thunder clap, just like St. Paul. This point of his life we call his conversion. After a long retreat he asked for ordination. But before being ordained he gave away his inheritance.

He was ordained to the diaconate and priesthood on the same day. After this he went back to the Canons of Xanten and tried to convert them back to the strict rules of the Canons, but unfortunately he was not successful. Norbert received permission from Pope Gelasius II to become a wandering preacher. He went out to preach to the people (bare-footed) in a habit made of rough wool. Norbert followed the life of the apostles. In this way he tried to fill the gap between the Christian populace and monks living a distance from the people; and also the gap between the poor Christian folk and the rich Canons Regular who turned away from the people. Pope Callixtus and Bishop Bartholomew encouraged him to settle and found a Community in Premontre, in northern France, near Laon. This new community combined the contemplative lifestyle of the monks with apostolic activity.



- St. Victor Cathedral in Xanten

They called themselves Praemonstratensians (they also have other names today: Norbertines and White Canons). St. Norbert built his monasteries in the towns or busy areas, because the centre of their life was not the Abbey or Monastery, but the 'open church' and the festive Liturgy, that was celebrated in these churches. The Liturgy was not based on the rite of the monks, but on the more festive diocesan liturgy that was used in large Cathedrals.

They chose the Rule of St. Augustine as the guiding light for the new Community. This was the rule of the priests living around their Bishop in community.

St. Norbert and his companions, known now as Canons Regular were well aware that preaching the Word of God was an integral part of their vocation. They chose white for their habit which was made of rough wool, with the



-Conversion of Norbert- Stain-glas window of St.Victor Dom in Xanten (made in 1976)

mantilla, or mocetum of the Canons, and which spontaneously recalled the angels of the Resurrection. With this, Norbert was offering his disciples a symbol that constantly reminded them of their mission. This symbolism was easily understood and acknowledged by all.

"Welcoming the poor and pilgrims – now called hospitality – was a part of a great Canonical tradition. It was a work of mercy par excellence in an age when pilgrimage was regarded as a consecrated state of life, and travel conditions were particularly difficult. Many of Norbert's first companions died on the road exhausted by the hardship of winter. Norbert was especially fond of this ministry of charity.



-Premontre

He had a hospice built at Premontre and found the means to see that it was properly equipped. The hospice was a complex institution: an inn for travellers, a shelter for the poor and a hospital for the sick. The Canons took care of the men, and the sisters took care of the women. From the very beginning of the Order, Blessed Ricvera of Clastres ran the hospice for her entire life and wished to be buried in the cemetery for the poor whom she had served with such selfless devotion. Later the hospice was moved to Quentin".(1)

(Bernard Ardura: the Order of Premontre, History and Spirituality, later: (1))

Norbert is pictured with the double ranged staff and palladium of an Archbishop and with a chalice or monstrance which recalls his Eucharist-centred spirituality. It was the reforming, pacifying and civilizing influence of St. Norbert, combined with the zeal he inspired, that resulted in the creation of almost 400 Houses of the Order throughout medieval Europe. Norbert attracted both men and women to his Communities with his preaching and peace-making. Six (6) years after founding the Order, he was made the Archbishop of Magdeburg, so he relinquished the leadership of the Order to Hugh. He died in Magdeburg on June 6 in 1134 and his relics were taken to Prague after he was beatified at the end of the 16th century.



-St. Norbert of Xanten-painting from 1700.in the abbey-church Duisburg Hamborn



-St. Norbert receives the Rule from St. Augustine, copy from the manuscript „Vitas Norbert, 12. century-Schäftlam



- Abbey of Our Lady, the burial place of St Norbert in 1134



-Strahov in Prague

3. THE HISTORY OF THE NORBERTINE SISTERS:

Shortly after Norbert had settled down with his 40 confreres in Premontre, he went on to establish also the Order of the Premonstratensian Sisters, with the help of Ricvera Clastres. According to Norbert, the Premontre community was supposed "to imitate the Jerusalem community: a multitude of believers gathered around the apostles". (1) Thus besides the canons, we find men and women resolved to "convert", which in the 12th century meant to embrace religious life. For this reason Premontre continued to grow after 1121 in the form of a double Abbey, with the community of the Canons, its lay brothers and its community of Sisters.

Norbert liked this structure, since it represented a multitude of believers around the apostles in Jerusalem". (1) The number of Sisters and lay brothers was in those days around 80. In an Order full of outstanding men, and women like Ricvera of Clastres, or Adele of Montmorency, not to mention Agnes, who was a countess of Braine and who founded several monasteries, the Community lacked neither birth nor ability. But these women did not feel relegated to the rank of lay brothers. Men and women disciples of Norbert were so devoted to the Eucharist and the priesthood that, following the apostolic movement, they entrusted themselves to the priests in their quest for perfection, just as the first Christians had entrusted themselves to the apostles. "It mattered little to Norbert and to these women, that they were not the head or arms of the Church; it was enough that by their love, contemplation and devotions, they were its heart." (1) The nuns, "piae mulieres", lived separately, yet near to the monasteries of the Canons Regular. Besides prayer their most important job was taking care of the poor and the pilgrims, and the confreres. The leader of the nuns was the Prioress. The magister exteriorum ruled the details of the Sisters' community life. After the death of Norbert, by 1137, influenced by a rigorous trend that tended to separate the Nuns from the Norbertine fathers, the Fathers started to dissolve the double cloisters.



-Ricvera of Clastres, the first Norbertine sister



-Mary and the Christ-Child between the Norbertines from "Klooster Ter Apel"



-Canonisses as nurses in a hospital "Livre de la Vie Active"

"Hugh Fosses, the Abbot of Premontre thought that the General Chapter should adopt the principle that the double cloisters should be divided, which is what Norbert had already tried to do in Cappenberg and Ilbenstadt. From this point on the Norbertine nuns found themselves in a new situation. Specifically, they became responsible for chanting the Divine Office by themselves. The needs of a religious community of women led them to adopt an internal structure similar to that of the men's communities. The educated Sisters became *sorores cantantes*, while those who were illiterate became *sorores converseae*". (1) Around 1240 the annual

Chapter of the Abbots discussed again the problem of the Sisters and created a new Constitution for them. In the light of this, the Monastery could receive no more than 20 Sisters and their Prioress had to be under the instruction of the Abbot. Further monitoring was to be conducted by the Circator appointed by the General Chapter. He was the one who received the young girls into the Order, and they in turn put their vow into his hands. The Praemonstratensian Sisters followed the contemplative life in their Monasteries in the 13th century, but they performed charity services as well: taking care of the poor, caring for the sick, receiving the guests. There was a House (Somlovasarhely in Hungary) which had the right for certification (sealing) and the Sisters were practising it at the time of the Turkish invasion. The habit worn by the Sisters was similar to that of the Canons Regular, and they also received the title of the Canonesses.

The decision of the General Chapter to separate the women's Communities from those of the men's Abbeys had different results in different regions. "In countries where the capitular decrees were rigorously enforced, the Sisters were settled on farms or rural lands" (1) There were many examples of that. The Sisters were housed in a separate building at a distance from, but in the same geographical area as, the Norbertine priests. They remained independent of the Fathers. In some places the Sister's Community occupied the

Monastery and the priests moved to another Abbey. Some Communities who had to leave their cloister joined the Cistercian Nuns.

The Circaries in Brabant, Flanders and Saxony took very seriously the double-cloister decision and migrated to Middle and Eastern Europe. So although Norbertine nuns disappeared from France, Belgium, Burgundy and Switzerland, the number of convents was rising in Westphalia, Bohemia, Moravia, Poland and Hungary. This was partly because the nobility and wealthy people wanted a good education for their daughters.(2)

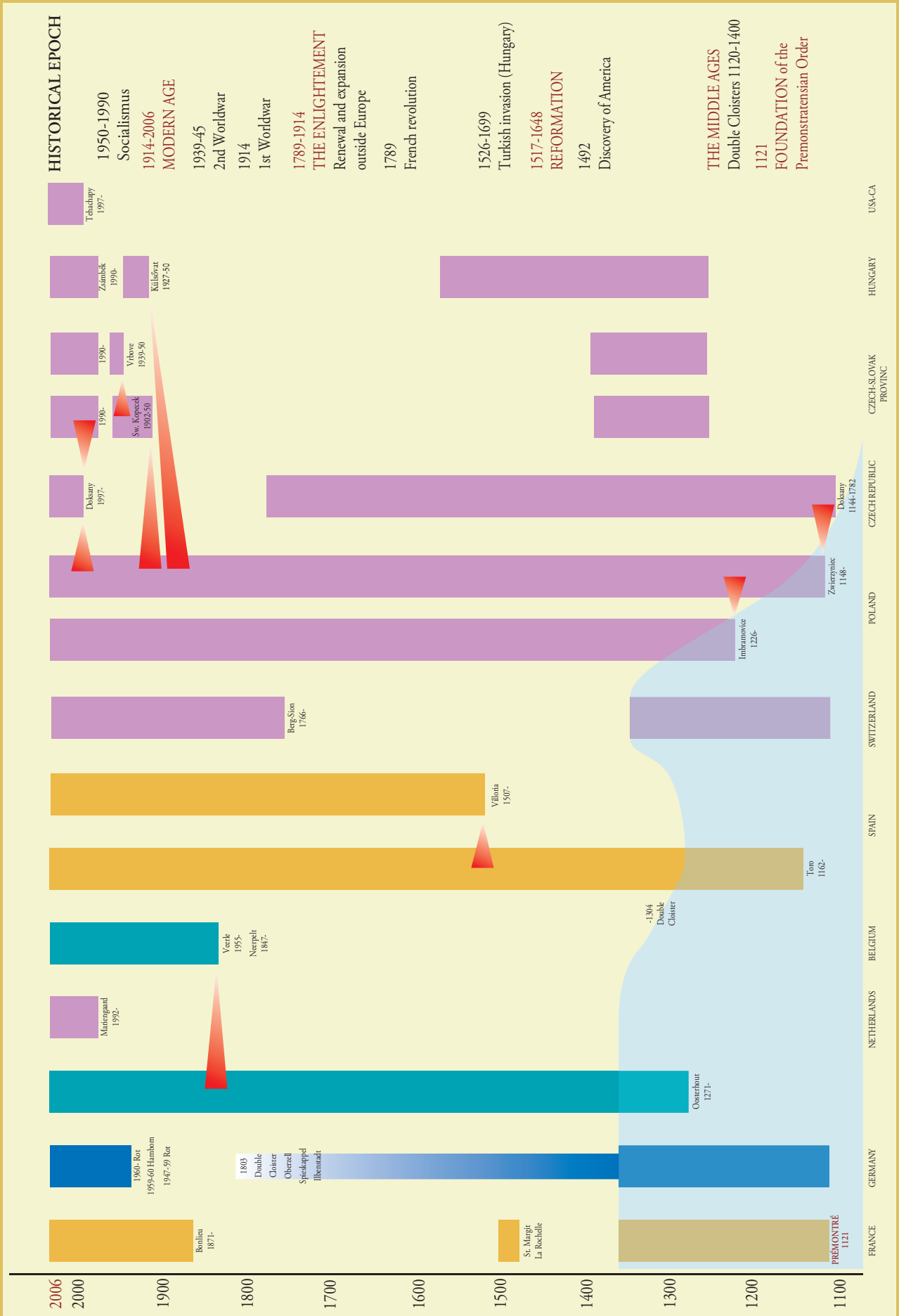
Writing of this period Andura says: "In France the only place that remained, was St. Margaret of La Rochelle, until the city was invaded by the Calvinists. In Spain, St. Sophia in Toro and Villora in Orbigo, broke with the Order and rejoined it later, which is what saved them. In Hungary, the women's

Monasteries prospered, until they were totally destroyed by the Turks in 1590. In Poland, all the women's Communities lasted until the first partition of Poland in 1772. Westphalia, and to a certain extent Bohemia, were really the land of the Norbertine Canonesses, recruited for the most part from among the nobility. Nowhere else were they so numerous: There were thirty-three (33) monasteries of women versus 15 abbeys. In Germany double monasteries were maintained until 1803 in Oberzell, Spieskappel, Ilbenstadt and Adelberg.(3) These women's communities had their own goods separated from that of the Canons. Two Norbertine nuns have received the honours of the altar. Blessed Gertude of Hesse, who was offered as a very young girl to the Monastery of Altenberg by her mother St. Elisabeth of Hungary, and blessed Bronislawa of the Monastery of Krakow, a first cousin of St. Hyacinth. The process for the beatification of Emilia Podoska (Zwierzyniec) and of Sr. Rose of (Bonlieau) have already been started.



-St Norbert -mural in the former Cistercian Abbey- S. Severo in Orvieto 14. century

CALENDAR OF EVENTS



4. THE PREMONSTRATENSIAN SISTERS TODAY:

Short summary of the history of the communities of the Norbertine Sisters of the world today (The Calendar of Events 12-13 p. shows the foundation and continuity of the 14 different communities, as far as it is known). The Communities of Sisters vary in status: 1). Under the jurisdiction of the Order there are 2 houses: Oosterhout (NL) and Veerle (B), 2) Under the jurisdiction of the local ordinary: there are five houses: Bonlieu (F), Imbramovice (Pl), Zwierzyniec (Pl), Toro (ES), and Villoria de Orbigo (ES), 3) Institutes affiliated to the Order - Religious congregations: there are 5 houses: St. Gallen-Berg Zion (Ch), Norbertine Sisters of Svaty Kopecek, (CZ) Norbertine Sisters of Vrbove, (Sl) Norbertine Sisters of Zsámbékt (HU), Community of the Sisters Rot an der Rot (D). (3)

The Norbertine Community of Saint-Catharinadal Oosterhout (Netherlands) can reflect on a history of more than seven centuries. The recorded history begins in the year 1271. From the beginning, Saint-Catharinadal has enjoyed the protection of the Lords of Breda. It became possible in 1847 for sisters from Oosterhout to start a new community in the Belgian Neerpelt. The sisters from this group moved in 1955 to Veerle (Belgium). It became independent of Oosterhout in 1920.

The Community of Canonesses Premonstratenses of Santa Sofia Toro (Zamora-Spain) and the one of Villoria de Orbigo (Leon) forms a unique pair. First it was situated in the double Monastery of the Premonstratensian Fathers of San Miguel de Grox; in accordance with the, then current, custom of the Order, sharing its church. When the double cloister was dissolved, the five surviving sisters of the double Monastery of San Miguel de Groh were transferred to the house of Santa Sofia on June 12 1304. In 1243, Mr Rodrigo Fernandez Valduerna (Count of Astorga) donated his palace which was in the village of Villoria de Orbigo to the Premonstratensians. The Norbertine Fathers lived here until 1511 when the fathers left and seven sisters came here from the Monastery of Santa Sofia. The Norbertine nuns have been living here ever since.

In Germany there were more than 35 houses of the Sisters in the Middle Ages, but none of them survived. But in 1947 the convent of St. Norbert in Windberg wanted to restore the historical Abbey of St. Norbert in Rot an der Rot. Therefore the Premonstratensians founded a new community. In the 12th century there were many Norbertine Sister communities in France, but we find only two of them in the 14th century, and they slowly died out. The Norbertine Sister community in Bonlieu was founded in 1871.

There were Sister communities in Switzerland as early as 1126. In the first half of the 13th century there were 15 cloisters, but they did not survive the 14th century, the time

of the Reformation. The Cloister Berg Zion in St. Gallen was founded in 1766 with the aim of Perpetual Adoration.

One of the oldest foundations of the Sisters' Monasteries is in Doksany (Bohemia, near Prague). This monastery was established in 1144 by Princess Gertruda as a Sisters' Convent of the Monastery of Strahov in Prague. The cloister developed so quickly, that they could initiate further foundations, the Monastery in Krakow-Zwierzyniec (Poland), in 1162. The regular life in Doksany was uninterrupted until 1782 when the Convent was abolished by order of Emperor Joseph II. Some centuries later in 1998 it was re-established from Krakow-Zwierzyniec. According to one theory, the Monastery in Zwierzyniec (Poland) was founded in 1148, by Agnieszka, the sister of Princess Gertuda, who founded the Convent in Doksany. The Monastery of the Sisters in Imbramowice was founded, with the help of the Norbertine Sisters in Krakow, by Iwon Odrowaz, the bishop of Krakow, in 1226. It is situated on the Dlubnia River, 40 kilometers northwest of Krakow. The Order of the Premonstartensian Sisters of Hungary was re-established in 1927 after a period of 300 years. This was in Kulsovat and was founded by the Sisters of Zwierzyniec and by a Hungarian Norbertine Father, Dr Sebastian Raday. The first Prioress of this young community had earlier been a Prioress in Imbramovice, Sr. Wisniecka Anzelma. After the socialist regime, the motherhouse was placed in Zsambek. The Congregation of the Premonstratensian Sisters of Slovakia and Bohemia was established in 1902 on the Holy Mountain (Svaty Kopecek) near Olomouc, by the Norbertine Father, Frejka from Strahov with the help of Sr. Michaela from Zwierzyniec. Today the Congregation has two provinces, Czech and Slovak. The house of the Superior of the Congregation is in Trnava (Slovak Republic); the motherhouse of the Slovak province is in Vrbove. The motherhouse of the Bohemian Sisters is in the Holy Mountain - Olomouc (Czech). The Norbertine Community Mariengaard (Netherlands) was actually founded on June 6th 1992, as an association of women wanting to live as religious, sharing prayer, life and possessions.

The Norbertine Association of St. Joseph Tehachapy is the first foundation of future Norbertine canonesses in the United States. They were founded by, and were affiliated with St. Michael's Abbey, in Orange County, California, in 1997. In 2001, the Monastery was named "Bethlehem Priory of St. Joseph".

Today we have altogether 326 Norbertine Sisters living in 14 different communities on two continents, Europe and the USA.



- Familytree from Cracow, Zwierzyniec

5. THE STORIES OF THE DIFFERENT HOUSES OF THE PREMONSTRATENSIAN SISTERS TODAY

(The Houses are shown in alphabetical order of countries)

5.1. BELGIUM

VEERLE

THE PRIORY

OF THE NORBERTINE SISTERSIMMACULATA at VEERLE is the only Convent of the Norbertine Order in Belgium. It was founded in 1858 at Neerpelt by the Sisters in Oosterhout in the province of Limburg and the diocese of Liege and in 1955 it was transferred and established at Veerle in the province and diocese of Antwerp.

History: The occasion of the foundation at Neerpelt was the wish of the Reverend Franciscus Lommelaers, parish priest of Neerpelt from 1820 to 1859, to have a school for girls in his parish.

Looking for religious teachers, the Parish Priest approached the Convent of Norbertine nuns at Oosterhout in the Netherlands. These Sisters were also teaching, as it was on that condition laid down by Napoleon that the religious community could survive. All contemplative Monasteries were abolished under the rule of Napoleon because these institutions were, so to speak, without any use in society. The Reverend Lommelaers, regularly visited his sister in Oosterhout, who had entered there in 1811 and had died as Prioress in 1855. In 1856 Mr. Theodoor Brouwers died in Neerpelt. At his death he left a house with outbuildings and a garden in the centre of the village. The Parish Priest considered it a place suitable for his plans. After considerable negotiations with the Order, the ecclesiastical and civil authorities and the parish priest implemented the plans.

The official establishment opened on September 28th, 1858. From Oosterhout eight Sisters came to Neerpelt and in the following years, 1859 and



-The sisters' convent from the court

1860, six more were added. Sister Evermoda Brouwers was Superior of the Houses. After the death of Reverend Lommelaers on September 3rd 1865, the care of the Sisters was entrusted to Norbertine confreres of the Abbeys of Berne and Tongerlo. At the end of 1859 the school gates opened. The Sisters were responsible for the teaching for 28 years, but the task was taken over in 1887 by the sisters of the Holy Cross of Liege. From that time the Community of Norbertine nuns continued to exist as a contemplative Convent and in 1920 it



-Praying the vesper in the Church of the cloister

became independent. In 1945 the Statuta Monialium Ordinis Praemonstratensians were drafted, and approved by the Holy See. In 1948 the convent, up to then under the jurisdiction of the diocese of Liege, came under the jurisdiction of the Order. In the meantime the Community had increased by new vocations. A large church was built next to the convent. To provide for the upkeep of the community, a farm was started and a vegetable garden and orchard were laid out. In 1874 a bakery was started for the making of altar bread. The Sisters also undertook needlework and embroidery for churches.

From 1949 onward new negotiations were undertaken with the town council and in 1952 the final decision was made. On March 15th the convent was expropriated to mutual advantage, and an estate was purchased in Veerle, which had belonged to the noble family doe Zerezo de Tejada. Next to the existing Castle a new Convent was built. On June 26th, 1955 the community moved into the new convent. Under the direction of Provost Verlinden the activities of the farm and of the bakery were extended considerably, and book-

binding was added in 1959. Care was taken of the church linen of many parishes and liturgical vestments were made. The evolution in both church and world, the Ecumenical Council of 1962 – 1965, and the subsequent General Chapter of the Order in 1968 – 1970 activated a series of changes. The liturgy

was adapted. The enclosure rules were relaxed. The Prioress and the Sisters could take part in meetings. They could attend days of study and visit their family. In the Convent, premises were organized to receive guests and groups. Between 1969 and 1973 assistance was given to the community of Bonlieu in France. Due to the fact that there were no vocations and because of the reduction in the number of Sisters and its effect on the future, the community was from 1988 onward intensely guided by a commission of the Order. From



-Visit of the Abbot General, Thomas Handgrättinger

this the plan was made to provide for the care of the elderly Sisters. After a search to organize this on a permanent basis, a working agreement was made with the CM, the Christian Mutuality, of the confederation Turnhout, which built a rest and care home next to the conventional buildings, for the region of the Zuiderkempen. This Home is managed independently.

Way of life: On January 22nd 2002 the Constitutions of the Canonesses Regular of the Order of Premontre were approved by the C.R.I.S. according to which the community of Veerle

lives its calling and mission in the Church and the Order. The Holy Eucharist is celebrated daily in the public chapel in which people of the parish and inmates of the rest house can take part. The Liturgy of the Hours is said in the House chapel and ample time has been provided for individual prayer. Part of the convent is reserved for the Sisters but is open to members of the Order on special occasions. Family, friends and visitors are received in the parlours for conversation and assistance. The park is always accessible to them. The Sisters celebrated the 150 year anniversary of their foundation in 2008.



-The sisters' convent from the court



-Playing the vesper in the Church of the cloister

-The sisters' convent form the street

5.2. CZECH REPUBLIC

DOKSZANY

The beginning of the convent in Doksany dates back to the year 1144 when it was founded by Princess Gertruda as a Sisters' Convent of the Monastery of Strahov in Prague.

Its history was similar to that of many other monasteries: flowering as well as decay, wealth as well as poverty, wars and floods, fires. The regular life was uninterrupted, until 1782 when the convent was abolished by order of Emperor Joseph II. At that time there were 49 sisters in the community. It served as an army hospital for a short time and in the end it was sold to a noble family of Aehrenthals who rebuilt it into a castle. The north wing was used as stables and a cowshed. These adaptations together with a gradual decay under the communist regime led to a complete devastation. The church and Parish house remained under the administration of Praemonstratensians of Strahov, with a short break during Communism. The first attempt to renew the contemplative life of the Praemonstratensian Sisters was made at the beginning of the 20th century. Several girls started their formation in the convent of Zwierzyniec in Cracow, Poland, but after their return it transpired that it was not possible to begin a cloistered regular life because of the reasons given by the Church and State administration. That was why the Congregation of the Praemonstratensian Sisters of the Holy Mountain came into existence (1902) and began to devote their time to apostolic works. But the desire for a life more strictly contemplative did not disappear from the hearts of the sisters.

In 1989 the fall of the Communist regime brought freedom to the Church. And so the idea to renew contemplative life could become a reality step by step. The ancient convent in Doksany which, regardless of all devastation was still standing, was chosen as a residence for the first Sisters. In 1997 Strahov Monastery bought the north part



- Cloister of Doksany

of the former Convent from the State and plans for its reconstruction started. Father Abbot Michael Projezdny asked the Canonry of Cracow to send Sisters to renew their former Motherhouse (the convent in Cracow had been founded in 1164 from Doksany).

Four Sisters (two from Poland and two from the Czech Republic) began their community life on

31.1.1998, provisionally in the parish house. The renovation of part of the convent started in 1998. In 2002 the work on one wing was finished and in January 2003 the community moved in. Till 2007 we were a dependent House of the Cracow convent and were living in a constitutional cloister.

THE CANONRY OF THE BIRTH OF OUR LADY

In 2007 the sisters' community in Doksany became legally independent. On 9.3. 2007 the Congregation for the Regulars and the Secular Institutes in Rome issued the decree of autonomy; the convent was confirmed by the Abbot General Thomas Handgrättinger as the independent Sisters' Canonry under the jurisdiction of the Order. P. Michael J. Pojezdny, Abbot of Strahov Canonry, was appointed the Father-Abbot of the new Canonry – in accord with the Sisters' wish and the centuries-long tradition of the convent in Doksany. The first electoral Chapter took place on 14.6. 2007 – under the chairmanship of the Abbot-General Thomas Handgrättinger and Father-Abbot Michael. Sister Alberta Chrobak was elected Prioress for the term of 12 years according to the current Constitutions of the Canonesses Regular of the Praemonstraten-



- Chapter of election 2007



- The church of the Nativity of our Lady

sian Order. On top of all the blessed events on 1.10. 2008 P. Adrian Pavel Zemek from Strahov was appointed the Provost of the Canonry. His duty is to provide pastoral care to the Sisters' Canonry in cooperation with the Prioress, and he can also vote at the general chapter of the Order as the deputy of our Canonry. This year we commemorate the outstanding personality of Czech history – St. Agnes of Bohemia who spent part of her childhood in Doksany – on 12.11. 2009 it will be 20 years since Pope John Paul II. canonized her. She – as the intercessor of the whole nation – stood at the beginning of the fall of Communism in 1989. We were the hostesses of her precious relic in the convent for a few days.

11 years have already passed since the present Canonry, The Birth of Our Lady, was renewed. The common life of the Sisters consisted in the work on the reconstruction of the convent buildings, the gradual forming of the common life customs including the rules of constitutional cloister, the formation of new Sisters, the arrangement of the material provisions for the community as well as the continuous formation of the Sisters. The community looked back at past years and set out in the new period of its existence with new determination – enriched by past experience but also more fragile and vulnerable, with hope for the future, but with a realistic view of the past as well. So we continue in our way of life:



- Reliquary of St. Agnes



- Our propst.

we make liturgical vestments, grow medicinal herbs and make teas and liquors from them. We take care of the church, and take in guests who want to spend some time in prayer and silence here. – For this purpose the new rooms in the north wing of the convent were reconstructed. There are a few women who are more closely connected with us as Tertiaries of our Canonry. They take part in our liturgical life and help us in various ways according to their limits. Our apostolate of prayer and sacrifice is aimed principally at the spiritual support of our brethren, both from Strahov Canonry and other Canonries. We are pleased that

we can pray for the people who ask us to invoke the intercession of St. Norbert – and here we must mention the prayer for pregnant women and marriages wanting children. Our Founder has become the last resort of a great many married couples and mothers. A large group of our benefactors – with whom we keep regular contact – belongs to our spiritual family too. Our Canonry could not develop without their spiritual and material support. We realize that there are still demanding tasks lying before us and we want to work on them according to our strength, and above all with the help of God. We believe that our Lord who guided us in past years will take charge of His work in future as well, and bring to the final goal what He himself began here.



-The cloister



-Working in the garden with herbs

5.3. CZECH-MORAVIAN AND SLOVAKIAN PROVINCES AND THE GENERELATE IN TRNAVA

THE CONGREGATION OF PREMONSTRATENSIAN SISTERS FROM HOLY HILL

The life of the Congregation of Premonstratensian Sisters, founded in 1902 by Reverend Adalbert Frejka, O.Praem from Strahov canonry (Prague) is today, after Communism failed in 1989, flourishing in two provinces: the Bohemian – Moravian Province, with the Motherhouse in Holy Hill near Olmouc, and the Slovak Province, with the Motherhouse in Vrbové. The office of the government of Congregation is in Slovakia in Trnava. In November 2006 a General Chapter of Congregation was held, and a new governing body established. The Superior General is now M.Hermana Lalikova there are five members of Council. In the same year chapters were held in both Provinces. The Congregation also has a new Assistant – Father Norbert Vehovsky, O.Praem. from



-General house in Trnava -Members of the Sisters' General Chapter

Strahov Canonry, who is competent consultant for the Congregation government. Fr. Vehovsky also attends meetings of the General Council.

The Government of the Congregation are also responsible for four Commissions:

- Commission for the Spirituality of the Order and Congregation
- Commission for the History of the Order and Congregation
- Commission for Liturgy
- Commission for work with Holy Scripture.



-Meeting of superiors



Also during the General Chapter the Ratio Institutionis - formation programme for our Congregation was approved. Sisters from both Provinces became familiar with this document through monthly "spiritual renewal" meeting. Ongoing formation for the Sisters in government is held twice a year with a prepared program. One sister from General Council is responsible for the Pastoral vocation work and there are teams in each Province. We are aware of the importance for our future of co-operation with the laity and had a conference for both Provincial Councils on the formation of the Laity and Sisters. For future work with young people and the laity, both Provinces are preparing and building Retreat Centres. Many people to-day want to stay in the Convent for a few days of spiritual renewal. The governing body of the Congregation have prepared a new edition of the Constitution. In communities both Provinces' community life, liturgy prayer and adoration are important. Our apostolic life is in catechesis in schools and universities, in social works in charity and in seminaries and bishops residences. Three Sisters from the Slovak Province started a mission in Volgograd Russia in September 2007. There are now 119 sisters in all the various Houses of the Provinces with an average age of



57 years. Finally a message from the General Chapter:

"In this world with its culture of longing for pleasure we want to live out our consecrated life in a radical conversion of heart.

The joy discovered in our Lord, will make us able to answer for the challenges of these times

and show the kindness and humanity of our Saviour Jesus Christ."



-Visit of Fr. Augustine Ullmann O.Praem

5.3.1.CZECH-MORAVIAN PROVINCE

NORBETINUM ON THE HOLY HILL – SVATY KOPECEK

The Czech-Moravian Province consists of two Communities – the majority of Sisters live and work on Svaty Kopecek near Olomouc and the other community is in Humpolec. Until 1950, the Sisters worked in parishes, cared for sick people and orphans and led a house for pilgrims. In 1950, Sisters were moved out from their convent. During Communism they worked all over the country. They had to accept any work whatsoever (in factory, rest home, hospital, etc.). After the Velvet Revolution in 1989, confiscated and considerably devastated Convents were given back to the Sisters, whose Sister's activities started to regenerate step by step.



-Convent

THE RESTART

In June 2000, the Lord allowed us to move from Radvanov to Norbertinum on Svaty Kopecek near Olomouc. We have renewed our community life, adoring the Eucharist, and taking care of older Sisters. The whole area consists of three buildings of different size, with an interconnected corridor. In January 2004, we put a new kitchen and a new laundry into service for people living on Svaty Kopecek, and the Norbertine confreres. In July 2005, we started a new nursing



-The blessing of the motherhouse



-The members of the provincial chapter



-Sisters in adoration chapel



- Prayer before the Lourds Shrine

home, where we take care of seniors. The house is called "The House of St. Norbert". The reconstruction of our Motherhouse was finished in May 2008.

Therefore we can now also offer accommodation for students from the Palacky University in a guest-house. Next to our Convent we have the beautiful Basilica of the Visitation of the Virgin Mary, where four confreres of Strahov Canonry are serving. We are cooperating with them in different ways.

OUR COMMON LIFE AND APOSTLESHIP

Our chapel is devoted to St. Norbert and this is the centre of our Community and Convent. We pay attention especially to adoration, a common liturgy, reading the Bible, and a community life. Our Motherhouse is more cloistered but we have also many contacts with people. The community finds regular relaxation in our garden where we grow vegetables for the kitchen and flowers for the chapel. Our meditation garden is very pleasant for Sisters and for guests of our Monastery, too. Three of our Sisters work outside the community. Sr. Rafaela helps at the Secretariat of the Archbishop and she is also the Choirmaster in the Basilica on Svaty Kopecek. Sr. Siarda teaches at the Theological Faculty of the Palacky University in Olomouc. She helps young people and spends a lot of time with them. Sr. Norberta helps her brother, who is the diocesan priest, as a housekeeper in Velky Tynec.

COMMUNITY IN HUMPOLEC



-Sisters in Humpolec

Our sisters lived in Humpolec from 1936 to 1950, when their activities were violently stopped by the Communist Regime. Since 1994 five of our Sisters have been running a nursing home in our building called "The House of The Blessed Bronislava". Four young Sisters now work here. The Convent of the Sisters is in a different building, but it is connected by a corridor with the nursing home. The Sisters also serve in the parish.

The Third Order - We are receiving people who want to live the Norbertine spirituality with us. They work in their parish and they pray some devotional exercises together. We meet them regularly in different spiritual and cultural programmes.

5.3.2. SLOVAK PPROVINCE

VRBOVE

The Motherhouse of the Slovak Province is in Vrbove, Klas-tor Pia XI. The Slovak Province was established in 1939 by Bishop Pavel Jantusch who was born in Vrbove and prepared a new monastery for the Sisters, and later a new building of a primary school. The Bishop, as our founder and benefactor, is buried in the chapel of our House. Sisters in Vrbove were teaching in schools; they also had a kindergarten and after the Second World War they were running also a house for orphans. Other Sisters were working at that time in many places in the Slovak Republic. Some Sisters worked in hospitals as nurses, some in Seminaries and many were teaching Religion in schools. We also had a boarding house for students. There were many vocations at that time. In 1950 the Communists took our school building, and our Sisters were taken from hospitals, schools and other public places. Some of them had to go to the Czech Republic and there they had to work in fields and in factories. All our novices (30 of them at that time) had to go back to their families. During the Communist years new young Sisters joined our Province secretly. The Sisters were working, without their habit, in many places and in many professions according to their education. Nobody knew that they were Sisters. Their formation and meeting with other Sisters was always secret. After the fall of Communism, some Houses were given back to the Sisters. Also, our school in Vrbove was returned.



-In the garden



-In the kitchen

Because this building was badly damaged, we had to go through a large reconstruction project. Now it houses our Novitiate and also the office of our Provincial Superior and her Council. There are now 60 Sisters in Vrbove and about 35 of them are retired. A house in Trnava was also given back to our Province. Our Sisters are now working and living in



-The sisters' convent



-Prayer in the convent-church



- Slovak province community day, Vrbove, opening of the liturgical year

-The province day in Vrbove

-Formation meeting held regularly in Vrbove

-The sisters in jubilee

7 communities, in a seminary for priests in Bratislava, at a Bishop's residence in Nitra and in some parishes. Our way of life is quite different because of the work that our Sisters do. But in all communities, our Sisters pay special attention to adoration, to common liturgy with chant, to reading the Bible and to community life. In our Motherhouse in Vrbove, that houses also the retired Sisters and the work of formation, we spend more time in adoration, singing common liturgy and common work in the garden and in the house. This house is more cloistered but we have many contacts with people. The Sisters of our Province are working as Catechism teachers at a primary school, High School and also at a University. Some Sisters are doing social work, a service which is very often requested by the people. In our Province we had a Province Chapter in June 2006. This Chapter opened the way for our mission. In September 2007 three of our sisters went to Russia in Volgograd. They work with one father



-Teaching Catechism

SVD from Slovakia. They are working in catechesis, social work with homeless people and help also with the only Catholic Church in Volgograd. Their mission is going well but



- Meeting of associates

there are some difficulties in getting visa for Russia now, but we hope they can continue. In the Province we try to do something about our ongoing formation. Beside our daily life we organise some meeting for Sisters with a

theme important for our life. Each year the Province is dedicated to a particular topic. A booklet is prepared with various themes and the Sisters meet in little groups and discuss them. One day at the end of each year, all the groups share in a discussion. So we have : the Year of Constitution, the Year of common life, Year of Eucharist, Year of Liturgy, and the Year of conversion. These discussions help us greatly.

Some young Sisters study at the Catholic Universities. But also some Sisters attend practical courses and some study English or French. In Vrbove, we are beginning to create a Spiritual centre of St.Norbert for our work with young people and for some meetings with the laity and for Bible. Recently we have had happy visits from young girls who come for summer camp or for spiritual renewal, as do young couple and families. The Norbertine Fathers help us with this work.

Sisters take the Eucharist to old or ill people in their homes, and also work with a group of children from very poor families, helping them with homework and life-skills. In addition there is a growing family of our Associates, which now numbers 200. A member of Council has responsibility for this, with a team to help her. The Associates meet in groups every month and also make spiritual retreats.



- Mission in Volgograd, Sisters in front of the Catholic church



- Sisters with Bishop Pickel



-Mission in Volgograd Summer camp



-Sister with students

5.4. FRANCE

BONLIEU

In the 12th century there were many communities of Norbertine Sisters in France. There were double cloisters existing there up to 1140, when the General Chapter decided to put the cloisters of the Sisters in separate accommodation at a



-The community in 1933

distance from the Abbeys. In the North of France, in Lotharingia and Floreffia, the communities of the Sisters were moved to the sides of the fields of the Norbertine Abbeys, and they were left on their own, so most of the communities died out. We can find only 2 Communities in the 14th century, Bonlieu and Mirambeau. (2). The Community of Bon-

lieu died out by the 15th century. The Community of Mirambeau was placed in La Rochelle, where they died out by the 16th century. The Norbertine Community of Bonlieu was revived in 1871. - We have to mention here the name of Mere Marie de la Droix, who became a Norbertine Canoness in 1869. She was the Foundress of the Norbertine monastery of Bonlieu. It was not without difficulty and much sacrifice.- But

again in 1901, because of the law against religious congregations, the Norbertine Community of 25 sisters had to leave Bonlieu. They found refuge in Belgium, near Grimbergen Abbey. With the help of the Norbertines of Grimbergen they made the Chateau habitable. The Norbertine nuns were not able to return to Bonlieu until 1933. By that time they numbered 22. On their return to France, the Sisters came again under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Valence and for their spiritual

direction they were placed under the Abbot of Frigolet. The Community was working till 2008. In 2007/08 two of the last Sisters died and the last one, Sr. Marie Beatrice moved to the St. Mary Community in Bourg St Andeol. So sadly the Convent of Bonlieu is now closed.



-St. Anne Church

5.5. GERMANY

ROT AN DER ROT, ST. MARIA

**Community of Norbertine Sisters
in Rot an der Rot - Our house
is called: "St. Maria"**

In 1947 the Convent of St. Norbert in Windberg (Bavarian Forest) wanted to re-establish the historical Abbey of St. Norbert in Rot an der Rot. As a financial basis they started a Home for children, and tried to find Sisters to take care of them. But at that time, after the war, it was difficult to find an existing Community that was able to send Sisters to Rot an der Rot. So the Praemonstratensians founded a new community. On 01.05.1950 two Sisters were vested and started community life in Rot an der Rot. In the year 1959 the community expanded to 10 Sisters, who are responsible for the care and catering of the children who came from Stuttgart. At the end of 1959 the Praemonstratensians Sisters left Rot for Duisburg-Hamborn in the Diocese of Essen, but the Sisters there were very much on their own. The Abbey of Geras in Nedorosterreich asked the Sisters to come and help them there. So they went to Geras. In 1960 the Diocese of Stuttgart bought the former cloister in Rot and used it as a youth-centre and the Sisters came back from Austria and took over the running of the House. There was a great need to use the rooms we were living in, so we were happy to move to the house opposite to the youth centre. Communication with the people became more intensive at this time, and people like to visit our Oratorium for private prayer or to participate in our prayer. Our community is controlled by the Bishop and we are constantly active. A big decision was made by our Community about the future of our sisters in Rot an der Rot. We had a very intensive discussion about our future. It was many years ago that we agreed that, if the situation demanded it, we would take space in the Franciscan Community in Reute, (cca. 30 Km away of Rot) But the Sisters were free to decide whether to move over to Reute or not. We have had very close connection with this community for many, many years. The Franciscan Sisters have been working in Rot in the



-Sisters at a feast celebration



-The former Abbey in Rot

kindergarden and in ambulant home care for many years. So we have a good relationship with them. During our meeting we talked about our future in a very open way with the Mother General of the Franciscans. We were able to tell her our hopes and wishes. It was really a holy hour which was directed by the Holy Spirit. The first Sister moved over to Reute in 2006, the others went a half year later. It was not an easy step for any of them. Looking at it from the view of the Bible it is an 'Exodus' into an unknown country, into the land of Promise, without knowing what is going to happen there. Though we are also called by the promise of „I Am, Who Is” (JAHVEH). The two of us, Sr. Renate and Ursula started our community life in Aulendorf in 2007. This village is very near to Reute, so we are in an everyday contact with our Sisters in Reute. Two of our Sisters died in 2007 and in 2008. Sr. Renate is teaching Cathecism and helping the Parsih in Aulendorf, Sr. Ursula is running the household, We took these steps with faith and confidence in God, who is with us on our way, and who knows our aims. So after giving up Rot an der Rot a new chapter has begun in the life of our Community.



-Going from the sisters' convent to the Abbey-Church



-Sisters saying good by to Rot an der Rot

5.6. HUNGARY

ZSAMBEK

Norbertine Sisters of Hungary

MISSION STATEMENT:

Euchristia, Poenitentia, Immaculata, Ecclesia - These words form the essence of our charisma that is ecclesiastical and missionary in serving the Church and the world with prayer and action - evangelization.

Short history: There were already Norbertine Sisters in Hungary in the Middle Ages (there were several houses, Ivancic, Somlovasarhely, Szeged, Brasso in Hungary in those days). In the 16th century at the time of the Turkish invasion, the Order of Sisters died out. It was re-established in 1927 by the Sister community of Zwierzyniec (Poland) and by a Hungarian Norbertine Father, Dr Sebastian Ráday. They started with 3 sisters in Küls vat. By 1950 we had 70 sisters in 11 houses all over Hungary. Our Sisters were teaching at primary schools, were

Once a week on Thursday we have an hour of Adoration, and we pray one hour after supper. We pray for our confreres, for our Order, for our benefactors, for special care for children, pregnant women and for people in need.

Formation: There is a six month Postulancy, a Novitiate of 2 years, 3 periods of 1 year plus a further 3 years Temporary Profession, and after that Solemn vows.

ACTIVITY:

Background: The centre of our work of rehabilitation and reconstruction is in Zsambek and the surrounding area, 30 kilometres from Budapest. As a direct result of 45 years of Communist rule our people suffered physical, mental and spiritual deprivation. When we began our work here, after the change of Government in 1990, we found a situation of almost total impoverishment and apathy. There was no employment, few skilled workers, family life had collapsed, the young had no role models or work ethic, and the self-image across the age groups was negative and hopeless. Families and children: Step by step we have developed facil-



-The sisters' convent

running nurseries and were cantors in the parishes. Religious orders were dispersed in Hungary in 1950, because of the Communist suppression, and only after the political changes in 1990 could our Sisters (35 surviving Sisters) reassemble and function publicly as a Community again. Now we have 20 Sisters in 3 houses in Hungary. Our Motherhouse is in Zsambek (30 Km west of Budapest). Here we have 10 sisters. We had to give up Bakonygyepes. Two of our Sisters died there and the third Sr Emerika is at our Motherhouse. We had to give up Küls vat as well, because of the health-problems of our Sister Hedvig. She is also now in Zsambék.

Charism: This is based on St. Norbert's care for the poor, living the life of love for God and his people, while keeping the Eucharist, Poenitentia, Immaculata, and Ecclesia in front of our eyes, in the spirit of the Rule of St. Augustine.

Prayers: We pray the Office of the Fathers: Prayer of the Hours. Every morning we have a half hour meditation before Lauds.

ities. We began with practical help and counselling for families, and started a Day Care Centre for children from 5 to 15 years, providing meals, clothing, one-to-one care, and introducing values that were previously unknown to them. This year 75 children are in attendance at the Centre.

Youth: Because no Further Education facilities were available within a 30 km radius, we opened in 1996 a Trade and Vocational Training School for young people from 15 upwards. They receive work-skill training to whatever level each can sustain, and there is a High School course, culminating in the National Matura Award, for the more able students. Trade courses include Catering, Handicrafts, Needlecraft, Tailoring and tutored workshops in Carpentry, Metalwork, Locksmithing and Building and Allied skills. This year we have 500 students from 15 to 23. It is a vital corrective to the influence of a failed ideology which, nevertheless, provided a type of security on which, sadly, previous genera-



-Vesper at the old Norbertine monastery (from the 13th century)

tions became dependent. Our emphasis throughout is on personal development, an awareness of values, and responsibility for community in Christ.

Additional projects: Out of these main elements have grown other projects. A) The provision of adult literacy classes for parents and older members of the local community. B) Job training for the unemployed and unskilled, which is run in partnership with Government.

Over-riding concern: Traditionally, Hungary is a Catholic country. But we found in 1993 that more people were atheist or agnostic than were Catholic. In all our Projects we work to foster a Christian outlook and, by the grace of God and thanks to our program of evangelization, Baptism, Mass and Sacraments are now central in the lives of increasing numbers of our people.



-Children from the Day Care Center



-Blessing of the new school- by Abot Martin from Schlögl in 2003



-Corpus Christy day



-Vesper at the old monastery



-Garden-party for the poor families



-Announcing Christmass



-Ordination of Br. Hermann Joseph of Gödöllő

5.7. NETHERLANDS

5.7.1. MARIENGAARD

Norbertine Community - Mariengaard

COMMUNIO

The life of Jesus of Nazareth, Son of Man, unique in his representation of the meaning of being, image of God, forms the very foundation of our Christian faith. His disciples followed

ACTIO

We all have part-time jobs outside the house; a deliberate choice, because we want to stand in the middle of society as well, so as to experience it personally. But there is necessity in it as well: In order to pursue the life we live, we need income. Our jobs are varied, as we are ourselves. From our community we want to contribute to the process of sharing faith by a modest programme of courses on various religious subjects in the facilities we have on our premises, and also occasionally in parishes. Together with our confreres and a



-The sisters' convent

Him and this is what we want to do as well. The words from the Acts of the Apostles that St. Augustine took as the origin for his Rule actually tell us everything there is to say about community: sharing the gifts of head, heart and hands, sharing as members of the community, establishing community by accepting each other day after day as Sister and Brother, by giving respect and love to one another.

STABILITAS LOCI

Fixed abode. When we set out to build a house we chose to build it on the estate of the priory De Essenburgh and we plan to stay there for years to come. But stabilitas loci is more than that. At first we wish to seek and find our home with The Eternal, within ourselves and with each other. In Him we have our roots and He wishes to give us a home. Building on this solid ground work we are able to offer a place to others, enabling them to leave behind for a while the worries of every day and regain or preserve their own basis.

small number of volunteers we succeed in maintaining both our houses and the beautiful estate.

CONTEMPLATIO

Our faith also requires maintenance. We gather three times daily with our confreres in the chapel for prayer and the celebration of the Eucharist. Every day we make time for personal prayer and meditation. During Advent and Lent we have a weekly meditation on what is occupying us liturgically during these periods of the year. Our confreres are invited to join us in this.

Approximately six times a year we have a reflective chapter with our confreres of the Priory, followed by a penitential liturgy on two of these occasions. We have someone from outside the community as a regular companion on our spiritual path.

PAST-PRESENT-FUTURE

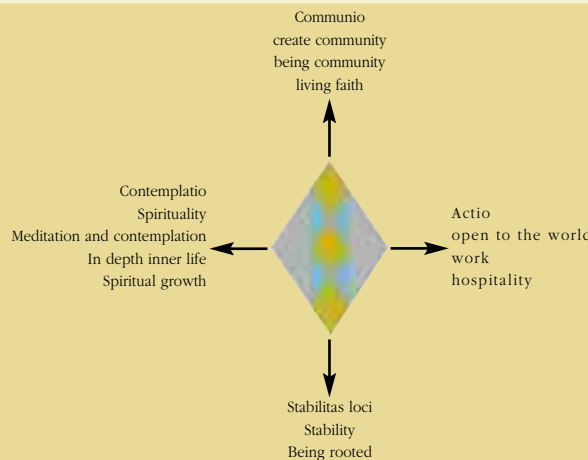
History – The Norbertine community Mariengaard was founded as an association of women wanting to live as religious sharing prayer, life and possessions. We live according to the Rule of St. Augustine, summarized in: living together in unity of heart and soul, directed to God, to St. Augustine and to our founder St. Norbert of Gennepe. This sentence taken from the Acts of the Apostles is the most precious source to live from. It teaches us the evangelical equality of all men and women, held by mutual love.

Present – Our community was actually founded on June 6th 1992. It stands within the Norbertine tradition which to us means: How are we affected and moved by what we see in society, and how can we answer to these things in obedience to our spiritual life? This is the very essence and motivation of Sister and Brotherhood. Our part-time jobs keep us engaged in the society. At home we consider it important to be hospitable, to serve the community (the local church and

the area we live in) by providing means of sharing faith, education and spiritual guidance and training.

Future – We're not living on an island. Our society with its tendency towards ongoing individualism asks us to reflect on our charism and to give meaning to the word Community in our society as well as in our Church. Our Coaching – Every 4 or 5 weeks we have an afternoon with our 'coach', a Franciscan priest. He coaches our community. Together we read a book on spirituality and he works with us around the themes from the book.

Our Work – Janny is a spiritual coach to men and women who are preparing themselves to work in our Diocese as pastoral workers. Willemien is the secretary of our Deanery. Liesbeth is a church musician in the parish of Harderwijk, and she works for the 'Workgroup for Liturgy' from the Abbey of Berne. Mieke is a teacher at primary school. Together with our brothers we offer a diverse program of courses.



The community

5.7.2. OOSTERHOUT

Norbertine Sister Priory
- Sint Catharinadal

The Norbertine community of Saint-Catharinadal can reflect on a history of more than seven centuries. The recorded history begins in the year 1271, when the General Chapter received a new group of Sisters into the Order of Premontre on 9th October. Several years previously, Servatius of Liedekerke, Lord of Breda, had gathered a group of women at his estate



de De Blauwe Camer, behind which three wings were constructed as a priory. The monumental buildings and especially the church which the Sisters had vacated in 1647 have recently been beautifully restored and now form a jewel in the city of Breda. During the

16th and 17th centuries the sisters had run a boarding school to provide financial security. In the time of Napoleon they started a small school for the poor in Oosterhout to ensure continuity in these changing circumstances. First there was



-The sisters' convent

in Vroenhout to lead a life of devotion. The story recounts that they were his seven daughters, and the eldest was called Catharina. Our community is named after her. From the beginning, Saint-Catharinadal has enjoyed the protection of the Lords of Breda, and the Sisters were provided with many gifts. The continuation of Saint-Catharinadal was seriously threatened at the end of the 16th century, as a result of the Reformation and conflict between the Spanish and State troops. And so it transpired that in 1625 there was only one Sister remaining, who determinedly stood firm and passed on the torch. In 1647 Prince Frederik Hendrik was no longer able to guarantee the safety of the Norbertine priory in Breda as the city had been in the hands of the State since 1637. The Sisters moved to Oosterhout where the Provost at the time, Balthasar Cruyt, had purchased the small Cas-

no church there, but at the beginning of the 18th century a small church was taken into use. But around 1900 it became necessary to build a larger church. In 1841 Saint-Catharinadal was granted the full rights to priory life. It became possible in 1847 for Sisters from Oosterhout to start a new community in the Belgian Neerpelt. The Sisters from this group moved later to Veerle. A second dependence was started in 1931 when 10 sisters from Oosterhout left for Petropolis in Brazil. Unfortunately this group could not be sustained and four Sisters returned to Saint-Catharinadal in the seventies. Around

1930 the fourth wing was built to complete the quadrangle. In 1964 it became apparent that the condition of the Neogothic church dating from 1900 had so seriously deteriorated that demolition and new construction was the only alternative.

Activity of the sisters: In the fifties the



-The sisters' art-work- calligraphy



-The Cloister

sisters were running a small book binding workshop, where the artistic talents of several sisters formed the basis 50 years ago for the Art Studio. The professionalism is thanks to the more personal training of several sisters in the Bavarian State Library of Munich, where they became qualified in the technique of book restoration. Currently the Art Studio enjoys a wide reputation even outside the Netherlands and Europe. Additionally the Sisters profit from the work by which they can develop their creativity and talents while congenially ensuring that valuable artefacts are kept for the future. Consequent to the Second Vatican Council, Saint-Catharinadal has intensely followed the changes given in the Premonstratensian Order. The trellises were removed; the sisters could attend external meetings.

The Rule of Saint Augustine, with the double openness to God and society, had been read through the centuries in the refectory as the guidelines for life. The Sisters, for centuries seen as cloistered sisters, grew to be what they are in depth: Canonesses of the Order of Premontre.

Our Community aspires to be: a House of Light. Our communal life finds its inspiration both in the community prayers and in the personal prayers of each individual Sister. We congregate four times a day in our Convent church to celebrate the Liturgy. Our own Liturgy Group sets the Order of Services and the printing is done in our own press.



-Restoration of codexes



A HOUSE OF HOSPITALITY

In response to the requirements of the Diaconate task we can receive thousands of guests each year, mostly in organized and ecumenical groups, for a day or afternoon visit with both a spiritual and cultural content.

AND A HOUSE OF CULTURE

Archive documents dating from 1271, a library renowned for its collection of aesthetic books from 1600 onward and also the monumental buildings provide a natural climate of culture. Three crafts are carried out in our Studio on request, namely, restoration and conservation of antique bibles and other valuable books, calligraphic works on parchment often with gold leaf embellishment, and modern leather craft.

A small group of about 20 people is beginning to form a sort of lay association around our life. They share our prayers where possible, provide voluntary services and in their own way expound the Life of the Apostles, in and with our community. For more than 730 years there were women who followed their calling in pleasurable times, but also through times of troubles and disappointment, as in any human lifetime. They were people who together joined with God, with each other and with many around them so that Saint-Catharinadal will always be a community of prayer to pass on the message of the Gospel.



-Singing the office in the Church

5.8. POLAND

5.8.1. IMBRAMOWICE

Monastery of Norbertine Sisters

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MONASTERY

The Monastery of the Norbertine Sisters in Imbramowice was founded in 1226 by Iwon Odrowaz, the bishop of Krakow, on the land of his uncle, Imbram. It is situated on the Dlubnia River, 40 kilometres northwest of Krakow. The founding and organization of the monastery was approved in 1229 by a Papal Bull of Gregory IX, with the help of the Norbertine sisters in Zwierzyniec. According to the chronicle of Abbot Witowski, the monastery was destroyed by invad-

the novitiate. After the Second World War the Norbertine Sisters in Imbramowice, faithful to tradition, resumed the work interrupted by enemy occupation and continued their didactic educational and formative training of girls, at the same time remaining faithful to their contemplative lifestyle. Seeing the pressing need of the rural community, the monastery established a school. Then in 1949 it was closed by the Communist government and the buildings and land were confiscated. Deprived of almost all means of support, the Sisters again found themselves in a very difficult situation. This lasted until 1992. The complex of antique Monastery buildings is now slowly regaining its former beauty. An especially precious gift of Divine Providence during the last decades is the dynamic growth of the cult of the Suffering Christ.



-The sisters' convent

ing Tatars in 1260 and it took a long time to rebuild. From the 16th century, the Canonesses were engaged in the apostolic work of education and schooling. This work continued throughout the centuries with periodic interruptions during the wars of annexation and during the times of foreign occupation. In 1710 the monastery with the Gothic church was destroyed by a fire. It was rebuilt by Abbess Groth and on the site of the original buildings there rose a complex of monastic architecture, which included the church with its artistically rich interior in the style of Later Baroque. In 1819, as a result of the persecution politics of the foreign occupation, many Norbertine houses were liquidated. The community of Imbramowice was sentenced to die out since it was not permitted to accept new candidates. But female religious of other communities, which were liquidated by the Russian government, were sent to the Imbramowice Monastery. The Norbertine house was stripped of its temporal goods and its library was looted and its very rare and precious works were lost. It was only in 1835 that Tsar Nicholas I permitted

A DESCRIPTION OF THE WAY OF LIFE IN COMMUNITY

As Canonesses of the Order of Premontre, we are called to live in strict Papal enclosure while adhering to the Norbertine spirituality and traditions handed down to us for generations. Every Sister entering our Monastery professes to live a hidden life permanently in common with the Sisters in this Monastery, according to the Rule of Saint Augustine. The Sisters form a community primarily to foster a oneness of heart and soul directed to God. The goal and essence of our contemplative vocation is `to remain in the missionary heart of the Church through constant prayer, self denial and the rendering of the offering of praise`. Four times a day the Sisters come together to pray in common, a total of six hours. This includes the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the Divine Office, meditation, rosary, novena to the Suffering Christ, crown to Divine Mercy and devotion to Saint Joseph. In addition, every Sister adores before the Blessed Sacrament individually every day for at least a half hour and attends to her Lectio Divina. Besides these daily prayers there are particular devotions con-



-Behind the grills



nected with certain Feasts and seasons of the year. As guardians of the Regional Sanctuary of the Suffering Christ

we feel especially called by our life endlessly to praise Our Lord Jesus in the mystery of His salutary Passion and implore His boundless mercy for ourselves and the whole world. As a community of Norbertine nuns observing the rule of strict papal enclosure we are dedicated in a special manner to the development of the cult of the Passion of Our Lord. In 2003 our monastery church was declared officially by our bishop as Regional Sanctuary of the Passion of Our Lord. Since then the months of August to November have become a time of special grace, during which we pray and share our faith with the pilgrims and visitors to this shrine. We rejoice when, at the foot of the miraculous image of Jesus with His side pierced by a lance, the ever growing numbers of pilgrims and people come to spend time in prayer and contemplation of the Sacred Heart. There is a constant increase in the number of people who seek comfort and strength in their sufferings and who are in contact with us by mail and telephone. We and they are in prayerful union. We greatly rejoice with them when Our Passionate Christ, whom



-The Suffering Christ

they adore in the Shrine's famous image, hears our prayers and shows them His mercy in a tangible manner. With the

help of the Order and the benefactors, we could finish the remodeling. So now we can give accommodation to about 50 pilgrims at one time. Formation: Full participation in the life of the community begins with Solemn Vows, which is preceded by three phases of religious formation: 6 – 9 months of postulancy, 2 years of novitiate and 3 years of juniorate. At present our community consists of fifteen persons. Eleven are perpetually professed, one is a juniorate, two are novices and one is a postulant.

Daily activities of the Sisters - Besides the work connected with the management of the Church and Monastery the Sisters are engaged in the reception of pilgrims, the propagation of the cult of the Suffering Christ, and in agricultural work.

They also busy themselves with sewing, embroidery and artistic creations.



-Sisters in the Refectory



- Pilgrimage-house of the Sisters



-Sisters in the Refectory

5.8.2. ZWIERZYNIECZ CRACOW

Premonstratensian Order



-The sisters' convent

The Norbertine Sisters are the oldest female religious order in Poland. They have been present in Koscielna Wies in the north of Poland since 1126. In the south of Poland the Norbertine Sisters hail from Doksany, thence the name soror Doxanensis. Some say that the Norbertine nunnery in Zwierzyniec was founded in the existing Church of the Holy Saviour (built in the 12th century in about 1148 by Agnieszka, the wife of Polish Prince Wladyslaw II Wygnaniec. Agnieszka's sister, Gertruda (Wladyslaw II Czeski's wife) founded the Norbertine convent in Doksany, near Prague in 1144. The other possible founder of the Zwierzyniec nunnery on the banks of the river Vistula is Jaksa Gryfita in 1162. The Norbertine Sisters have been living at this place up to now. Prior to the partition of Poland there were 4 Norbertine monasteries (in Wroclaw, Hebdow, Witow and Nowy Sacz) and 11 convents: Strzelno, Zwierzyniec, Plock, Busko, Czarnowas, Zukowo, Imbramowice, Krzyzanowice, Leczyca, Boleslawice and the Norbertine church and nunnery of Wislna



-The sisters' convent

St. in Cracow, founded in 1643 by the Prioress of Zwierzyniec Sister Dorota Kacka. The history of the convent is closely tied to the history of Poland and Cracow: the Tartar incursions of 1241, 1259 and 1287; the Swedish invasions (1655 – 1657 and 1702 – 1709); floods and plagues; the Austrian, Prussian and Russian partitions; and the two world wars (1914 and 1939). The Norbertine Sisters survived, rebuilding the nunnery and their monastic life. They also played an important educational role, running a convent school before the introduction of State education. Many generations of Norbertine sisters were witnesses of the faith and of God's love. Of special note were the Blessed Bronislawa (d. 1259), Judyta Krakowianka (d. 1255), Fabislaw 13th century, Malgorzata 13th century, Weronika (d. 1469), novice Zofia Lubomirska (d. 1637), Dorota Kacka (d. 1643), Anna Mlodziejowska and Anna Myszkowska who died at the hands of the Cossaks. Also the Lords' servant Emilia Podoska (d. 1889) who gave her life for the rebirth of the Order. Blessed Bronislawa is the most popular saint in Krakow and Poland. She is the patron of children, youth, and the suffering. The original nunnery in Doksany was dissolved by Kaiser Joseph II in 1782. It was Father Wojciech Frejka of Strahov and our Sister Michalina Andrusikiewicz who founded the Congregation of the Praemonstratensian Sisters in Svaty Kopecek near Olomouc in 1902. In 1905, Tsar Nicholas I issued an edict announcing tolerance for the Catholic Church. The Norbertine Sisters of Imbramowice re-opened the Novitiate, (founded in 1226), which had earlier been closed. The Zwierzyniec convent immediately sent aid in the form of 5 nuns. Sister Anzelma Wisnicka was Prioress there for three years. Father Sebastian Ráday, a Norbertine Canon Regular from Jaszov, and the above mentioned Sister Anzelma Wisnicka, founded the new Praemonstratensian Order in Kulsovat in Hungary in 1927. The period following the Second World War brought the difficult times of Communism to Eastern Europe. The Norbertines of Cracow continued to live in the convent. They shared their home, allocating part of the ground floor as classrooms to teach Religion to children and students. Father Abbot Michael Pojezdny and his brothers from Strahov inspired the revival of the contemplative Norbertine Order in



-The sisters' convent



-In front of the bl. Bronislava altar

Doksany on 2 February 1998. Among the first sisters were two Norbertine nuns (s. Teresa and s. Alberta) and two Praemonstratensian nuns from the Czech Congregation (s. Franciszka and s. Pavla). Thanks to divine providence and the patronage of the Blessed Bronislava, our Home, our convent and our community has been in existence since the 12th century. We strive to live under the charismatic influence of St. Norbert. We believe that the good Lord will send our Order new challenges. Works carried out by the Sisters – During the time of Communism the Sisters worked as a cottage industry, producing sweaters, embroidering, making puppets and dolls for children's theatres. Some of our nuns have pensions from this period. Our Convent church serves the parish



-Head relic of Bl. Bronislava

of the Holy Saviour. Besides the convent and parish church there are four chapels. The nuns serve the church through prayer and work in which they care for the tidiness and cleanliness of liturgical robes and altar cloths, and decorate the altar with flowers. One of our Sisters cooks in the presbytery for the Parish Priest and the Bishop. Our nuns also serve the parish of the Holiest Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ in Cracow-Lubocza, where there is no church. Almost the entire ground floor of our residence serves as a chapel for spiritual needs of Lubocza. Our nuns serve the poor who come to the convent gate, a service for which no charge is made. Our Sisters carry out all



necessary work in the convent and gardens. We serve all pilgrims who visit our church, the Sanctuary of the Blessed Bronislava. We give access to students, and academics tour old and rich archives. We serve our guests. Guests in our convent – We accept guests from our order, our families and others. Mission – Our special mission is prayer. We receive many telephone calls and letters, asking for the mediation and intercession of the Blessed Bronislava and the Lord's servant Emilia Podoska, in their prayers to God. We ask, give thanks and hope for the canonisation of Blessed Bronislava



-The community in the corridor of the convent



- Sister professing first vows

5.9. SPAIN

5.9.1. TORO (ZAMORA)

Monastery Norbertinas Premonstratensians of Santa Sofia

Monastery Norbertinas Praemonstratensians of Santa Sofia The Communities of Praemonstratensian Canonesses from Toro and from Villoria de Orbigo (Leon) form a unique pair in Spain. First it was a double monastery of the Praemonstratensian Fathers of San Miguel de Grox, following the custom of the Order in the Middle Ages. We located the foundation of our Monastery in 1162, at the time of Alfonso VIII, who donated to the Premonstratensians of Alba of Tormes the mount of San Miguel and fields in the village of Pobladura de los Huertos. It is 7 kilometres away from the city of



-Queen Maria Molina
gave the Sisters her palace

pared for her. The Abbey of San Miguel de Grox was suppressed in 1449, after being destroyed by the war in 1385. All the goods were passed to the Sisters of Santa Sofia. The General Chapter of 1460 recognized the rights of Santa Sofia. In 1507 the Sisters confirmed for the first time their membership as Premonstratensians. At this time our Monastery of Toro founded Villoria de Orbigo. Around 1573 and 1594 the circaria of Spain broke all relations with Premontrre. After reforming, according to the suggested principles of the Order, the circaria was called "Hispanic Congregation of the Premonstratensian Order". They no longer wanted to take care of the Monasteries of the Sisters and they saw



-Monastery of the Sisters



-Monastery of the Sisters

Toro,. In 1304, the five surviving Sisters of the double Monastery of San Miguel de Grox were transferred to the house of Santa Sofia in Pobladura de los Huertos, which was already owned by Praemonstratensians. The Fathers donated it to the Sisters in June 12 1304 together with the surrounding land. It was difficult for the Sisters to live there in those years, so they moved in the winter into the palace, that they were given by Queen Dna, Maria of Molina, wife of King D. Sancho IV on 20 September 1316. The palace of Maria de Molina was in good shape when the Premonstratensian Sisters arrived, but soon they had to remodel and adapt it to their conventual life. Juan XXII published a Bull in 1329, granting indulgences to those who helped with the work of the Convent. Queen Maria de Molina was considered to be the founder of the Monastery, so rooms were always pre-

themselves forced to go under the jurisdiction of the Bishops. Previously because the Order had not taken care of them, the female Monasteries of Freznillo, Brazacorton, Sordillos and others disappeared. During the 16th and 17th centuries, several Sisters of Toro lived in sanctity; Sisters Catherine Vazquez and Geronima Vela used such old habits, that for her funeral they had to use the habit of another Sister. Juana of Marina (1636) performed difficult exercises of penance. Francisca of Ulloa was ordered by the Bishop to reform convents of other religious families. The brave Prioress, Ana de Monroy, was sent to jail by the Bishop before leaving the habit and statutes of the Order. Others like Juana Cuevas and Catherine of Grove died in sanctity. From 1739 to 1952 the Monastery had Abbesses again, although it was set on fire by anti-clericals in 1834. In the middle of the 19th



-Sister playing the organ

century the community had an average of 18 Sisters and during this period relations with the Order settled again. Between 1836 and 1852 furniture and fittings and most of the files were confiscated; and so today we are without many of our historical documents.

Our community life: Our life is based on oratio and work. We have an average of 6 hours prayer daily: Eucharist, liturgical personal oration and adoration. Each day we sing the complete Laudes, Eucharist and Vespers and several days we include the Office of Reading and the intermediate hour of Sext. Every Sunday, on Holy Days and every Wednesday we have Adoration from 15.30 to 19.30, our church is open to all the faithful. On the first Thursday of every month, we have an additional hour of Adoration at night. And since March 2008 we have daily adoration from 19:00 to 20:00. Throughout the year, one Sister is accompanying the Lord all day, each day a different Sister. We have two recreations a day, one after lunch and the other after supper. On Thursday evenings we have a longer recreation while we work.

We continue to have capitulum faults daily, except on Sunday. Cloister: Up to now we have had a Papal cloister, but



-Sisters in the choir

two year ago we requested the sagrada Congregación to change to a Constitutional cloister, because we think that it is better adapted to our canonical life and to our Premonstratensian charisma. On the 6th October the community received some wonderful news. After five years in the Sacred Congregation and six months in our Bishopric, we received the approval of our own cloister which in future will be called Constitutional Cloister instead of Papal Cloister. We are very grateful to Abbot Ward Cortvriendt, the president of the Commission of Sisters, who negotiated to obtain a reply from the Sacred Congregation. Our Work: The Community has a small tailoring workshop, where our Sisters work for a living. All the able sisters participate in all the community work by doing cooking, sacristy work, cleaning, washing up and cultivating the garden and orchard. Each sister has her own job; when finished she has to go to the community work in the tailoring. Guest House: Our guest house is open to priests and religious people who want to have a retreat taking part with us in the Liturgy or simple rest. It is also open to young people who wish to get to know our way of life or need a spiritual accompaniment.



-Community of the Sisters



-Sisters in the garden



-Sisters in the garden



-Sisters working at the sewing machine

5.9.2. VILLORIA DE ORBIGO

Monastery of
Maria Assumption

THE HISTORY OF OUR MONASTERY

In 1243, Rodrigo Fernandez Valduerna (Count of Astorga), attracted by the faithful observance of Praemonstratensians and the great devotion that they had to the Virgin Mary, donated his Palace with all his many possessions to the Praemonstratensians. The Palace was situated in the village of Villoria de Orbigo. This happened at the time of the Abbot de Aguilar of Campoo (Palencia) and the Fathers lived here until 1511. When they left, seven Sisters from the Monastery of Toro arrived here and

Palace that they had in Astorga and there they lived until a new restoration of buildings was completed.

The work of restoration started in 1700, and was finished with the building of the church in 1774. In 1986 a part of the Monastery suffered another fire. Thanks to God we have been able to restore the necessary (main) part of the Monastery with donations from the Order, with the help of other religious houses, and good benefactors and good friends of the Community and of course with our work, as it is necessary to live with dignity.

Our community life: - In our community we try to live according to the evangelical advice and try to follow the Rule of Augustine as St. Norbert commanded it. We pray the Hours of the Liturgy and we have a Holy Mass every day. These



started community life. From that date on, the Monastery was used by the Praemonstratensian Nuns. There were times when the Monastery had many vocations and attracted many good and holy Sisters. For a long time the Monastery had consisted of forty nuns and in the 18th century there were more than sixty living at the same time. Now we are only a small community of a few Sisters and if God does not remedy it, we will have to suppress the Monastery, but we don't give up hope. In 1665 there was a deliberate fire in this Monastery, that burnt down the complete building along with all the documentation and the artistic Romanesque style. The nuns took refuge in a

are the main acts of our days. We sing part of the office and the part which we cannot sing, we pray.

Work in our community: - We are employed in sewing for a factory which really helps us to cover the financial needs of the community. We try to follow the Rule of Augustine as St. Norbert commanded it. We pray the Hours of the Liturgy and we have a Holy Mass every day. These are the main acts of our days. We sing part of the office and the part which we cannot sing, we pray.

Work in our community: - We are employed in sewing for a factory which really helps us to cover the financial needs of the community.



-The sisters' convent



-The convent of the sisters'



-The sisters' convent



-Entrance gate to the Convent



-At the Sister-meeting in Zwierzyniec

5.10. SWITZERLAND

ST. GALLEN -BERG SION

Maria Loretto on the Sion Hill
St. Gallen -Berg Sion

There were Sister Communities in Switzerland already in 1126.

In the first half of the 13th century, together with the Monasteries of men there were 15 cloisters, but they did not survive the Reformation in the 14th century. The Cloister Berg Sion in St. Gallen was founded in 1766 by Joseph Helg, with the aim of Perpetual Adoration. The Cloister is on the pilgrimroad from South-Germany to Einsiedeln, which goes through Uetliburg and Gomiswald. So the cloister was open for the pilgrims. The first sisters were sent by Rev. Helg to the Paemonstartensian Cloister Schussenried (this was in Baden Württemberg). There they got to know the Norbertine life and



after a short noviciate they made their vows. In spite of being under the jurisdiction of the Diocese, the Order kept its Norbertine spirituality. The Order could survive the stormy time of the French revolution thank to the Bishop of Chur and later St. Gallen. From the time of the very beginning of the Order, the convent had a prayer-group with the people living outside of the cloister, they call it a 3 times boundage,

because they are closing into their prayers during the day quite often the living, the ded and people who are just in their dying bed. The community was acknowledged by the General Chapter in 1897 and in those days it was put under the supervision of the Abbot of Tepl. Today the community is under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of St. Gallen. Inspite of this work the sisters have been adoring in front of the

Eucharist daily.24 Hours And they are of course praying the office as well.



-The sisters' convent



-In the garden





-The community



-In the refectory



-In the choir



-Sisters praying vesper



-Bible reading



-Recreation

5.11. USA

TEHACHAPY

-THE BETHLEHAMPRIORY OF ST. JOSEPH

The Norbertine Association is the first foundation of future Norbertine canonesses in the United States. We were founded by and are affiliated with St. Michael's Abbey in Orange County, California. At the time of our canonical erection, the five "founding" sisters were living the common life in a townhouse near the Abbey, which enabled the sisters to assist daily at Holy Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours, and also to attend various classes offered by our priest-conféres at the Abbey. In June of 1998, after receiving the Norbertine habit

November, the sisters visited seven Norbertine sisters' communities, many other Norbertine abbeys and women's communities, and the Order's generalate house in Rome. In the summer of 1999, the sisters became aware of a 476-acre property located in the mountains near Tehachapi, California, about 120 miles from the Abbey. In early November 1999, the five sisters purchased and moved into a vacant former convent of teaching-sisters in a parish in Santa Ana, California, beginning to receive new postulants for the first time. The convent provided them with temporary living space while the main ranch house in Tehachapi was being renovated into a temporary convent and chapel. In late May 2000, the sisters, then seven in number, moved to Tehachapi. By the end



-Community July 07 2008

and religious names, and with Mother Mary Augustine having been named superior, the first five sisters of the Association began a canonical novitiate year of formation with a cloistered community of Dominican nuns in Buffalo, New York, with the support of our "Pater Abbas", Father Abbot Eugene Hayes. Having completed this canonical novitiate year, the sisters returned to the Abbey in late July of 1999. Mother Mary Augustine made her first profession on August 6, and the following month Father Abbot sent the sisters to Europe to continue their formation. From September to early

of 2000, the community had grown to ten sisters, and has since expanded to twenty sisters from all over the globe as of Spring 2009, having thirteen (13) professed, four (4) novices, one (1) donata, one (1) postulant, and one (1) donata candidate. Our current monastery and chapel consists of the renovated ranch house mentioned above, three modular trailers and some storage sheds. Our community's principal goal is to be recognized by the Order and the Church as an autonomous house of Norbertine canonesses. Although our current housing situation is far from the monastic ideal, we



- Choral office



- Profession



- Class

nevertheless strive to carry out as much as possible the founding charism and spirit of our holy founder, St. Norbert. We follow the Rule of St. Augustine and the Constitutions of the Canonesses Regular of Premontre, observing the three evangelical counsels and the requirements of stability in cloister and on-going conversion. Recognizing that the heart of our vocation is the solemn and reverential celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the seven canonical hours of the Divine Office in common in choir, we give pride of place to the official music and language of the Church—Gregorian Chant and Latin. Our liturgical prayer is fostered by daily periods of private prayer, especially Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and Lectio Divina, and by an assiduous life of penance and sacrifice. We especially embrace and incorporate into our lives those practices which we hope reflect our deep respect for the *vita apostolica* and the five hallmarks of the Norbertine charism, such as the Chapter of faults, devotion to Our Lady and the Holy Souls, etc. Following our Founder, whom Popes called a “loyal son”, we joyfully adhere to the teachings of Holy Mother Church, the Magisterium and our beloved Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI. Additionally, we are committed to our sisters’ ongoing formation, which is generously facilitated by our confreres from Orange and sometimes from other communities. In keeping with the Norbertine charism of hospitality, we welcome all to assist at Holy Mass and the Divine Office, and we also have our Bethany Guest House for those who would like to spend the night or experience our way of life for a more extended peri-



-Vestmen made by the sisters



-Children

od. Non-cloistered areas are available to Bethany House guests for walks and hikes. Visitors come from across the United States and further as well. Occasionally, we also host “Question & Answer” sessions for various groups of young people so they can learn about our Norbertine way of life. As it is the Norbertine tradition to be self-sufficient and to have manual labor, from our inception we have experiment-

ed with various income-producing industries. To this end, we run a little gift shop, in which we sell specialty food and apothecary items, stationery, priestly vestments, rosaries, crocheted baptismal blankets—all hand-made by the sisters, as well as religious books and other articles. We continue our farming efforts, raising chickens, (eggs are either sold or used for the sisters and their guests) along with cows and goats. By means of a new greenhouse (2009), we hope to compensate for the long mountain winters as we grow our own fruits and vegetables, both for our use and for our best-selling jams. To help our bees, we have begun planting lavender around our property. The honey is a very popular item in our gift shop. Our dairy kitchen, which looks to be a major industry, is preparing for expansion and government approval so that we can begin selling our cheeses (we have produced close to twenty tasty varieties already) which we make from the milk of our cows and goats. Because of our very limited time and space, our efforts have necessarily been constrained, but with God’s grace, we hope that every aspect of our community will reach maturity in His providential time.



- Recreation crafts



-Cheesewheels

6. PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS OF THE SISTERS

6.1. THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL MEETING OF THE SISTERS IN 2004 IN KRAKOW





6.2. INTERNATIONAL YOUTHMEETING
OF THE NORBERTINE ORDER IN 2004 IN NOVA RISE



6.3. SISTERS AT THE GENERAL CHAPTER 2006-FREISING



6.4. MEETINGS OF THE COMMISSION PRO SORORIBUS

CRACOW, TARBES, IMBRAMOWICE



6.5. START OF THE ST. NORBERT YEAR

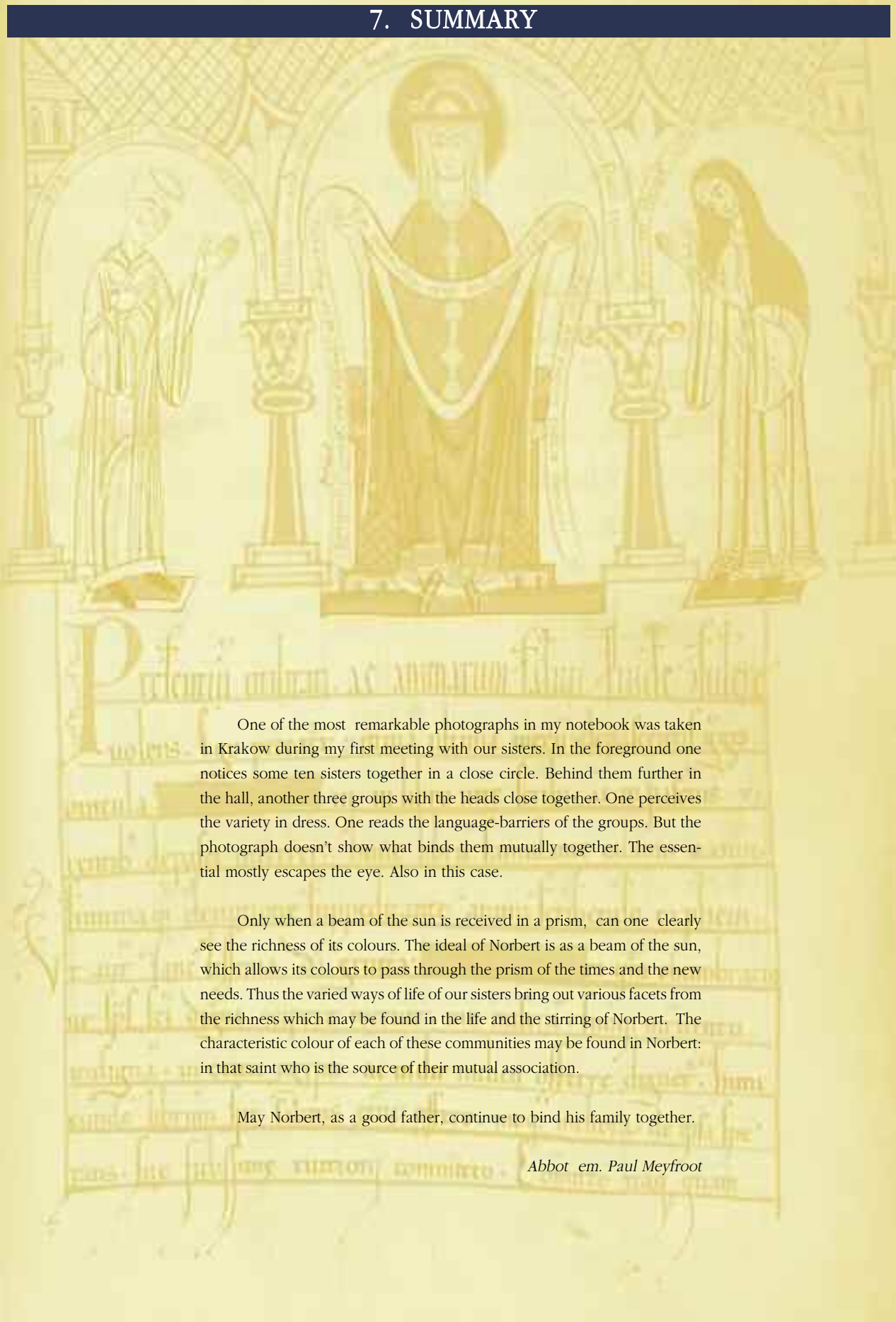
XANTEN JUNE 4 2009



MAGDEBURG JUNE 5 2009



7. SUMMARY



One of the most remarkable photographs in my notebook was taken in Krakow during my first meeting with our sisters. In the foreground one notices some ten sisters together in a close circle. Behind them further in the hall, another three groups with the heads close together. One perceives the variety in dress. One reads the language-barriers of the groups. But the photograph doesn't show what binds them mutually together. The essential mostly escapes the eye. Also in this case.

Only when a beam of the sun is received in a prism, can one clearly see the richness of its colours. The ideal of Norbert is as a beam of the sun, which allows its colours to pass through the prism of the times and the new needs. Thus the varied ways of life of our sisters bring out various facets from the richness which may be found in the life and the stirring of Norbert. The characteristic colour of each of these communities may be found in Norbert: in that saint who is the source of their mutual association.

May Norbert, as a good father, continue to bind his family together.

Abbot em. Paul Meyfroot

8. ADDRESSES OF THE HOUSES OF THE NORBERTINE SISTERS (3)

BELGIUM

VERLE

Address: Norbertinessenpriorij Immaculata
Diestse baan 62
B 2431 Veerle
Tel/fax: +32-(0)14 84 11 38
Syng. Postalis: 000-0334580-27

CZECH

DOKSZANY

Address: Kla ter sester premonstratek
CZ – 411 82 Doksany 1
Tel: 00/42/0/416 861 197
Fax: 00/42/0/416 815 431
E-mail: sorores.opraem@cbox.cz

OLOMOUCZ Superiorissa provinciae Svaty Kopecek

Address: Sestry Premonstratky
Olomouc-Svaty Kopecek
Sadove namesti 152/39, 772 00
Ceska republika
Tel: 0420 585385465-6 / mob: 0420 603331043
E-mail: cesmor.pro@volny.cz

FRANCE

BONLIEU

Address: Communaute des Premontres
Monastere Sainte Anne
F-26160 Bonlieu sur Roubion
France
Tel: 75 53 92 23
Fax: 75 53 86 50

GERMANY

ROT AN DER ROT

Address: Norbertusschwestern
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CONTENT:

	Prologue: Letter of the Abbot General Thomas Handgrätinger	
1.	Who are the Canons Regular?	7
2.	St. Norbert and the Premonstratensian Order	8
3.	Short history of the Norbertine Sisters	9
4.	Premonstratensian Sisters today	14
5.	The history of the different Houses of the Norbertine Sisters	16
5.1.	BELGIUM	
	Veerle	16
5.2.	CZECH REPUBLIC	18
5.2.1.	Dokszany	18
5.2.2.	Olomoucz	20
5.3.	FRANCE	
	Bonlieu	22
5.4.	GERMANY	
	Rot an der Rot	23
5.5.	HUNGARY	
	Zsámbék	24
5.6.	NETHERLANDS	26
5.6.1.	Mariengaard	26
5.6.2.	Oosterhout	28
5.7.	POLAND	30
5.7.1.	Imbramovice	30
5.7.2.	Krakow	32
5.8.	SLOVAKIA	
	Vrbove	34
5.9.	SPAIN	36
5.9.1.	Toro	36
5.9.2.	Villoria	38
5.10.	SWITZERLAND	
	St. Gallen-Berg Sion	40
5.11.	USA	
	Tehachapi	42
6.	The first International Meeting of the Sisters in Krakow in Photos	44
7.	Summary- Abbot Paul Meyfroot	46
8.	Addresses of the Houses of the Norbertine Sisters	47
	Bibliography	49

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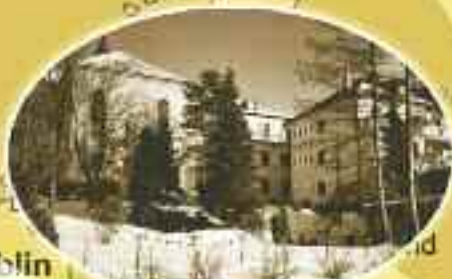




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