Daylesford Abbey exists to enrich the church by our Norbertine communio, nourished by contemplation on God’s word, made visible in worship and service within the local church.

Celebrating a Hundred Years of Priestly Ministry with our Jubilarians: Abbot Emeritus Richard Antonucci and Father James Rodia

Daylesford’s worshipping Community supports the Church in Ukraine through Strahov Abbey in the Czech Republic and Jasov Abbey in Slovakia.
This year we rejoice with two of our confreres – Fr. James Rodia and Abbot Emeritus Richard Antonucci – who both celebrate their 50th anniversary of priestly ordination. This lifelong commitment to priestly service is definitely something to be highlighted and celebrated. Thank you, Fr. Jim and Abbot Richard, and many more blessings to you in the years to come.

However, there is something of concern that we should also be aware of, especially for those of us who appreciate the efforts of our Pope to make our Church more reflective of the compassion of God. During the past year we have discovered several very negative “cartoons” of Pope Francis that had been placed in our Abbey church. They could accurately be described as “vicious” in their characterizations. I find this quite troubling. Additionally, I have heard some members of the Church refer to our Pope as a heretic or as “the antichrist.” Such irreverent hostility, I must confess, is simply dumbfounding. Surely, this is a totally inappropriate way to speak of the Vicar of Christ on earth. These or similar sentiments are based on what I believe to be a blatant misjudgment of Pope Francis and a grave misunderstanding of Church history. Such demonization can only contribute to the serious divisions in our Church and cause irreparable harm to its mission.

To counterbalance such destructive negativity and to properly inform those who do not fully understand Pope Francis, we are delighted to have the very well-respected Church historian – Dr. Massimo Faggioli – speak at Daylesford Abbey’s Founders’ Day on Saturday morning, November 5, 2022. Dr. Faggioli will present two talks on Pope Francis, which will surely be illuminating. The first is entitled Pope Francis’ Roots in Vatican II and the second Understanding Francis’ Vision for the Church.

My hope is that these two talks will help give us a more balanced and more objective understanding of our current Pope in the larger context of Church history. I hope you will make every effort to attend these important presentations. More information on this and other programs the Abbey is offering is available further on in this newsletter and our website.

Lastly, I want to thank the members of our lay community who contributed so generously to the support of the Ukrainian refugees, arranged by two of our Norbertine Abbeys in Eastern Europe. This is a wonderful example of charitable faith and a commitment to authentic Norbertine hospitality for which our Order has long been known. I am extremely pleased to report that Daylesford Abbey and its lay partners continue to give witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
This year we rejoice with two of our confreres – Fr. James Rodia and Abbot Emeritus Richard Antonucci – who both celebrate their 50th anniversary of priestly ordination. This lifelong commitment to priestly service is definitely something to be highlighted and celebrated. Thank you, Fr. Jim and Abbot Richard, and many more blessings to you in the years to come.

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Saint Paul says that we should be “overflowing with thankfulness” (Col 2:7) – “always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph 5:20).

Both verses come easily to the heart and lips of the Norbertine Community of Daylesford Abbey. For we are deeply grateful to the hundreds of good and generous friends who have supported our capital campaign to “Repair My Church” – which has enabled us to replace the entire HVAC system in the Abbey Church, begin the work of redoing the lighting over the altar, pews and choir area and prepare for the needed repairs on the roof.

We had been advised that the three-stage project would likely cost some $1,700,000 but, that goal seemed beyond our reach, especially in the face of the COVID restrictions that kept so many from coming to pray with us on Sunday mornings – although happily many people did join us virtually, thanks to the live-steaming that we began in 2021. Thus, we set a target of $1,100,000.

Twelve months later, we have received gifts and pledges that surpassed both these numbers. Indeed, thanks to the extraordinary support of so many good friends & benefactors, our final total reached $2,000,000. So, yes, we are “overflowing with thankfulness” to the Lord who has blessed us with so many friends and benefactors -- and, with grateful hearts, we ask His blessing on those who have been so good to us.
Fr. Nick: Abbot Richard I’d like to get a sense of your early attraction to the Norbertine Order. Was there a particular model or mentor that inspired and encouraged you? …… Abbot Richard: When I got to the then Bishop Neumann High School I saw how the Norbertines acted and related with one another in an appealing way. They kidded around with one another and laughed a lot. As a fourteen-year-old I found this appealing and I know that’s one of the things that attracted me to the Norbertines. If I had to single out one Norbertine, it was Fr. George Feider. Fr. George spent his entire priestly life at the high school and was a real role model and mentor to me even after I entered the Order … Fr. Nick: When you first joined the Order, what were your goals? What were you hoping to accomplish with your life? Abbot Richard: My overall goal in becoming a priest was simply to help people in whatever way I could. I had (and still have) a great interest in teaching math & was blessed to be able to do so for some years. Fr. Nick: Abbot Richard, in your career in the Order you held a number of positions of leadership. When you were elected Abbot, what were your hopes, expectations and concerns? … Abbot Richard: I tell people that all I ever wanted in the Order was to teach math at Neumann. But as I tell it, I kept being “invited” into positions of authority. But, as I believe St. Paul says, authentic authority is about service. So that’s the basis around which I experienced my different roles …

Fr. Nick: Reflecting on your tenure as Abbot, of what were you most proud? Abbot Richard: I don’t know about feeling proud of things I did as Abbot. The Abbot’s primary ministry is the community which elected him. You can imagine that with so many different personalities and backgrounds, this takes different shapes. With the help of my spiritual director, I was blessed to be able to see that many of the challenges and disappointments were really opportunities for me personally. God is Good! … Fr. Nick: Reflecting on your 50th anniversary of priesthood, what struck you first and most deeply? Abbot Richard: What strikes me first is that I can’t believe I have been ordained for 50 years! So much has changed in the world, in the church, and in myself. I have been blessed with such a loving family. My sister Elaine and my brother Gil, and so many loving and supportive friends over the years. That’s why I had so many people at my jubilee Mass and dinner. I wanted to celebrate with them all! Fr. Nick: After all the festivities when everyone had returned home, what were your own reflections, emotions and prayers? Abbot Richard: Great question! Again, my basic thought was how privileged I am to be a priest of 50 years, to have such a great family and Community and also so many loyal and loving friends. When I think of all these I simply smile and offer a short but sincere prayer of thanksgiving.
Fr. Rodia graduated from what was known as Bishop Neumann High School in South Philly. The following fall, he entered the Norbertine Novitiate (first stage of becoming a Norbertine) at the then Daylesford Priory, which is now the Berwyn YMCA. It was a big adjustment for the South Philly lad moving from a row home into suburban life in Berwyn. After that first year, Fr. Jim went to St. Norbert College in DePere, Wisconsin, for four years, where he earned his bachelor’s degree in Spanish. After college, he spent one year student teaching at Neumann in South Philly. He thought he had died and gone to heaven being back at his old high school and in his neighborhood with family and friends nearby. Next came a move to the newly built Daylesford Abbey for three years of intensive theology classes. In 1971 he was ordained a transitional deacon and was ordained to the priesthood on May 20, 1972.

After ordination, Fr. Jim spent many years teaching at Neumann High School in South Philly. A reliable source states that he had the reputation of being one of the best teachers in the school because of the unique way he engaged the students. They loved him and loved the opportunity to interact with him.

After many years of teaching, Jim went into parish ministry, where he helped at Saint Gabriel’s, St. Monica’s, St. Richard’s, and now at St. Norbert’s Parishes.

So many of us have observed what a good preacher Fr. Jim is and an outstanding servant of the church.

Let’s thank and congratulate Fr. Jim for his 50 years as a priest.

MAY GOD BLESS HIM ALWAYS!
“Fr. John, if you can ask the people of the United States to pray for one thing, please ask them to pray for hope.” This was the response to my question of Archbishop Mycola Luchko, O.P. of Mukachevo, Ukraine on July 2, 2022, “Your Excellency, I would like to ask the people of the United States to pray for what you need. For what should I ask?” On my recent trip to Eastern Europe, I had the unique opportunity to visit with Archbishop Mycola and Ukrainian refugees in Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Ukraine.

How did this opportunity come about? It came about primarily through a friendship and the generosity of so many who responded to a request to help the people of Ukraine. The friendship I reference is my friendship with our Norbertine Abbot Martin Štrbák of Jasov Abbey in Slovakia. Jasov is a mere 90 miles from the Ukraine border. When the attack on Ukraine began in late February, I was in contact with Abbot Martin. I told him that many of the people who worship at Daylesford Abbey were eager to help the people of Ukraine. He told me that he was working closely with two men who had direct access to Ukrainian refugees and relief efforts to help them: Radoslav Dráb of an organization called Smile as a Gift, and Fr. Peter Žarkovsky, President of Caritas Ukraine. What a blessing it was and is to have a way to help our brothers and sisters in need directly through Abbot Martin, Rado and Fr. Peter. And to know firsthand exactly where our donations would go!

The response of our worshipping community has been incredible -- and
... Reflections on My Recent Travels to Eastern Europe
by Fr. John C. Zagarella, O. Praem.

it was an expression of their gratitude that resulted in an invitation from them for me to go and visit many of the people helped directly by our contributions in Slovakia and in Ukraine. We were able to cross the border into Ukraine with the help of the Advisor to the Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic, Eduard Buraš. I also made contact with Fr. Henry Jordanek of our Abbey of Strahov in Prague. Through Fr. Henry, several refugee families have also received aid from the generosity of the larger Daylesford worshipping community. I was able to visit with some of these families as well.

There are no words to describe this experience. These pictures speak a thousand words, as they say, but only capture a portion of the heartbreak and hope I experienced in these brothers and sisters of ours. If you are so inclined to help, please send a check to Daylesford Abbey to my attention and on the memo line, write Ukrainian Relief. And above all, please join me in praying for hope.
Annual Giving 2022

In February we began our Annual Giving campaign, our largest fundraiser and a major part of our annual budget. Last year, the campaign raised $284,000. When we closed our campaign on June 30, we netted $291,000. We give thanks and praise to God, to our faithful donors, and to Dolly Johnson, our Annual Giving chair.

Golf Outing

On June 20, we held the Abbey’s 19th annual Golf Outing. 70 golfers and 95 dinner guests gathered together at Hershey’s Mill Golf Club for a beautiful day of recreation and good food. The Abbey received $15,750 from the event. Many thanks to John and Marita Parthemore, who have chaired this event for 19 years. Mark your calendar for next year’s outing on Monday, June 19, 2023.

Raffle at Abbey Picnic

Raffle chances were mailed out in early June. Tickets were also available in the Abbey church, and on the Abbey’s website. The annual Picnic, when the winning names will be drawn, will take place after Mass on Sunday, September 11 - when this Newsletter is going to press!

Art Show

The 2022 Abbey Art Show will take place through the weekend of October 7-9. Please mark your calendars. Come and enjoy the creativity, imagination, and beauty! Last year’s Art Show raised $10,500 for the Abbey. Many thanks to Karen Landman and the members of the committee for organizing this annual event and fundraiser.

Dinner Dance & Auction

The Abbey’s 54th annual Dinner Dance & Auction is set for Friday, November 18 at Aronimink Golf Club. Invitations will be sent in the Fall. Last year’s event, which commemorated the 900th anniversary of the Norbertine Order, netted $50,000. The Dinner Dance is an opportunity to give thanks to God for the many members of the Abbey Community who have helped expand our mission over the years. We are grateful to Regina and William Brown for chairing this year’s event.
Teilhard de Chardin: Cosmology, Consciousness, and Contemplation
with Andrew Del Rossi, Th.D.
Tuesdays, Sept. 13, 20, 27, 2022 @ 6:30PM - 8:00PM
Offering: $30 Register by September 6, 2022 (Dinner available before each session at 5:40 PM for $15 - with two weeks notice.)

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, SJ was a mystic priest and scientist whose dynamic vision and spirituality present a pathway for understanding the relationship between faith and evolution. Teilhard sees evolution as the universe growing closer to God by becoming more "spiritualized” and "Christified.” As the universe increases in its material complexity, there is a corresponding increase in consciousness, leading us to become ever-more aware of the Divine Fire burning at the heart of matter and bringing all into union. In this three-part series, we will explore the life and vision of Teilhard, taking time to unpack his mysticism and consider the role of contemplation within the unfolding of cosmic evolution.

Women’s Scripture Study
with Ann Hermans
Thursdays beginning September 15 through November 3 @ 1:00PM - 2:15PM
Free Will Offering

Ann Hermans, Daylesford Abbey Associate, will lead a scripture study for women using the Little Rock Series. The study will begin with the Gospel of Mark.

Reclaiming Vatican II
with Fr. Joseph Serano, O. Praem.
Tuesdays, October 5, 11, 18, 25, 2022 @ 6:30PM - 8:00PM
Offering: $40 Register by September 28, 2022 (Dinner available before each session at 5:40 PM for $15 - with two weeks notice.)

The Second Vatican Council met four times in Rome between 1962 and 1965. Daylesford Abbey became independent from St. Norbert Abbey in Wisconsin in 1963. Literally, then, our Abbey was founded in the midst of Vatican II and, in many ways, this explains our basic self-understanding. The four sessions of this program will look at the eight chapters that comprise the Council’s ‘Constitution on the Church’, a document that is at the heart of what Pope Francis calls “synodality” – a call to “participation”, remembering that “all the baptized” are meant to share in the life and ministry of the church. Participants are invited to get their own copy of the document (some 60 pages) and read chapters one & two before the first session on October 4th.

Registration is easy! Phone: (610) 647-2530 ext. 1330
Email: registrations@daylesford.org Online: www.daylesford.org
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Daylesford Abbey
GROUP RETREATS
The Spirituality and Retreat Center at Daylesford Abbey provides an ideal setting for your unique retreat or event. The Center is open to people of all faiths, and all ethnic and racial backgrounds. We welcome groups to hold retreats, days of recollection and meetings/workshops in our facility. Whether you are coming from a church, school, support group, or community group, we trust you will be enriched by the beauty and tranquility of the Abbey.

COMPLIMENTARY ABBEY AMENITIES INCLUDE:
- Prayer spaces in the church and chapels, Mary Garden and Heil Garden
- Spacious grounds, walking paths, wildlife pond and outdoor Stations of the Cross
- Adjacent Fox Hollow Hiking Trail
- The Abbot Killeen Library
- WiFi access
- Air-Conditioned Meeting Rooms
- 36 guest bedrooms (both singles and doubles)
- Retreatant lounge
- Elevator and Handicap Accessible Entrance
- Dining Hall (with meals for special needs)

For more information and pricing, call (610) 601-8702 or email adr@daylesford.org.

PRIVATE RETREATS
The Spirituality and Retreat Center is open for private, personal retreats. There is plenty of room to roam our beautiful grounds, located in the Chester County countryside about 20 miles west of Philadelphia. Take time this Fall or Winter to immerse yourself in the peace and serenity of a private retreat at the Abbey.

Suggested Donation: $115 first night, $90 each additional night (meals included)
To book a private retreat, call (610) 601-8702 or email adr@daylesford.org.

Take a virtual mini-tour of Daylesford Abbey and its verdant 90-acre grounds by viewing the video found at www.daylesford.org/spirituality-center/private-retreats

Retreat Gift Cards Now Available
Give the gifts of peace, tranquility, and reflection. Gift cards are a donation in exchange for a retreat at Daylesford Abbey’s Spirituality and Retreat Center. Options are available for Weekend Retreats, Five-Day Retreats, and Single Day Retreats. Please visit: www.daylesford.org/product-category/retreat/
JOIN US FOR OUR FOUNDERS’ DAY PROGRAM

Pope Francis’ Roots in Vatican II and Understanding His Vision for the Church
with Massimo Faggioli, Ph.D.

Saturday, November 5, 2022 @ 9:30AM - 12:00PM
Offering: $30     Students: $20

Daylesford Abbey welcomes Dr. Massimo Faggioli as its featured speaker for Founders’ Day 2022. The morning will feature two talks from Dr. Faggioli. The first will explore Pope Francis’ roots in the Second Vatican Council, followed by a short break and a second talk which will seek to better understand Pope Francis’ Vision for the Church beyond Vatican II.

Dr. Faggioli is a married, lay Roman Catholic, church historian, and full professor in the Department of Religious Studies at Villanova University. He writes regularly for newspapers and journals on the Church, religion and politics, and frequently gives public lectures on the Church and on Vatican II.