



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

## Introduction

The Norbertines of St. Norbert Abbey in De Pere, Wis., developed and continue to guide many ministries in the local community and beyond. St. Norbert College, because of its scope and enduring impact, is one of the abbey's primary apostolates, its largest ministerial endeavor. The mission of the college is rooted in *communio* and three core traditions – Catholic, Norbertine and liberal arts. In this brief statement, the college and abbey communities seek to highlight and affirm the importance of the Catholic tradition, and reflect on the ways in which this tradition both grounds and shapes the college experience. This statement articulates a response to the question, “What does it mean that St. Norbert College is a *Catholic* institution of higher education?” In answering this question, the document reflects on the way the Catholic tradition invites us to see the world, on Catholic identity and the academic life, and, ultimately, on the way St. Norbert College's religious identity invites all its members to live.

## Catholic Identity and the Academic Life

The Catholic tradition is grounded in the life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It affirms that God's fullness is communicated in the message and person of Jesus. Catholic communities strive to bring this message and reality to all corners of the world. The Catholic tradition, drawing on the church's universal mission, affirms the work of God in all dimensions of existence.

The Catholic tradition values intellectual curiosity and academic excellence, asking all to join in the search for the true, the good and the beautiful. Carefully attending to the teaching of the church's magisterium, Catholic colleges and universities uphold the importance of academic freedom. Grounded in the love of learning, the desire for God, and the pursuit of truth and goodness, the Catholic intellectual tradition welcomes all views into the conversation, appreciating the contributions of diverse backgrounds, commitments and experiences.

St. Norbert College is committed to providing a liberal arts education that supports the proper autonomy and integration of faith and reason, science and religion, contemplation and action. When the riches of higher education – including timeless texts, the arts, the sciences and technology – are studied as part of the Catholic Intellectual Tradition, the meaning of human life is examined not only within empirical methods, but also in relationship to the transcendent. Learning is not pursued for individual gain, but is oriented toward service and informed by systematic reflection on our responsibility for each other and the life of the world.

## Catholic Worldview: A Way of Seeing

St. Norbert College seeks to cultivate a Catholic way of looking at reality for all who are formed by the college experience. The college succeeds in its effort to be a Catholic institution to the extent that, while respecting the varied faith commitments and spiritual paths of the members of our community, this Catholic sensibility becomes an integral part of our ethos and culture. Inspired by the example of Jesus Christ, the community witnesses the dignity of all persons and affirms the sacredness of God's creation. The Catholic worldview acknowledges the gravity of sin and failing, but remains determinedly hopeful, viewing as good those things which promote human flourishing and help us recognize our *communio* with one another in God. This way of seeing calls all members of the community to a rich and responsible way of being in the world.

## A Holy Life: A Way of Being in the World

Since the Catholic tradition affirms an understanding of God as a *communio* of persons in relationship, it rejects narcissistic individualism or narrow self-interest and lifts up the vision and values needed to live in community with generosity and compassion. Thus, the Catholic tradition calls us to be servants in the world and witnesses to the love God shows us.

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Catholic identity is inseparable from contemplative practice, the celebration of common prayer and the sacraments. Inspired by Norbert of Xanten's powerful reputation as a preacher and his deep devotion to the Eucharist, our campus celebrations of Eucharist are marked by strong preaching, compelling beauty and clear grounding in contemplative prayer. Recognizing that the experience of Eucharist sends God's people out to bring good news to the world, our campus is called by the example of Norbert to the work of reconciliation and peace-building. Just as Norbert brought people together across differences, we celebrate the opportunity for our college community to come together, enriched by diverse faith commitments and spiritual paths, to preach joy and hope to a hurting world.

Through celebration of Eucharist and other sacraments, working to promote peace and reconciliation, and joining together in other expressions of Catholic, ecumenical and inter-religious prayer or dialogue, members of our college community are called to be of one mind and heart on the way to God, as described in the Rule of Augustine.

### **Holiness as a Call to Common Life**

Rooted in the Catholic understanding of God as a *communio* of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, St. Norbert College promotes the belief that God's vision for us is as a community in which all are received with radical hospitality and in which each member is attentive to the needs of others. This shapes the environment of the college and calls us to a solidarity with one another that opens out into solidarity with the entire human family, along with care for the world that is our common home.

### **Holiness as a Call to Social Justice**

Rooted in the Gospel message of Christ Jesus, St. Norbert College provides an educational environment that shapes students who not only become effective workers and impactful leaders but also agents of justice and proponents of peace. Classroom and co-curricular endeavors are linked to a commitment to work locally and globally: Local engagement flows from the Norbertine charism of stability, and global awareness reflects the nature of the universal church. Together, these dual foci support our work toward a more just world.