



SAINT AUGUSTINE'S HOUSE

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NEWSLETTER

Fall, A.D. 2021

✠ PAX

The Congregation of the Servants of Christ, St. Augustine's House, is an ecumenical Christian community whose life of discipleship is inspired and shaped by the Holy Rule of St. Benedict. We identify with the Lutheran tradition, understood as a movement within and for the one holy catholic and apostolic Church of Jesus Christ.

We are committed to the growth of the permanent resident community, to the pursuit of ecumenical understanding, and to the provision of retreats for members of the Fellowship of St. Augustine and others. We seek to serve the whole Church by our life of prayer and by the use of our facilities.

“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven...” Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

The approach of the fall season in this part of the world brings with it signals of significant change. Though it was recently light, it is once again dark at the times of Vigils and Compline. In the church at the time of Mass and at Vespers during the summer, the sun aligns with the round windows in the steeple and on the west and east walls of the church in such a way that bright round circles appear on the floor, on the walls, and, at times, even on the altar. The variant positions of these bright spots now indicate that the sun has reached its apex in the sky and is ever lowering. As the overall outside temperatures have decreased, the foliage in the woods on the property has become less and less dense, and the vibrant colors of spring have become more and more dark and deep as plants have slowed their growth to prepare for the coming fall and winter. We are definitely in that transition time approaching fall and winter and all the colder and darker days they bring.

Change is inevitable. As the Greek philosopher Heraclitus is quoted as saying, “Change is the only constant in life.” There have been so many changes here at St. Augustine’s House over the past year. At this time last year, having struggled through what had been the worst of COVID, things seemed to be evening out a bit. Though we could not have a regular Fellowship Day because of continuing pandemic concerns, we were able to hold Pastoral Council meetings as usual, and it seemed that we were headed back to normal, even if it were to be a “new normal”. Then Father Jude’s health began to decline and he passed, and then Father John’s health began to decline and he passed, leaving quite a wide, unexpected hole in the resident community. Father Jude passed just before the coming of Christmass, and we laid Father John to rest on Holy Monday, just before our celebration of the Resurrection. Sudden, unexpected change had come.

The Pastoral Council sprang into action to address the void left by these two rather unexpected losses. Br. Richard stepped up to resume his role as Prior so that the business of the House could continue, the offices of prayer having not been interrupted at all. The Pastoral Council has continued to meet to intentionally discern the path that the Lord is laying before this community, identifying our current strengths so that we may see what opportunities the Lord is laying before us as we continue to aspire to offer



people a place where they can be immersed in the alternate Christian worldview, a much-needed opportunity in the world today. In addition to planning for resumption of Fellowship Day this year, we are considering moving forward with the building of a refectory. Once this is accomplished, issues in the Retreat House can be addressed so that it may further fulfill its purpose for residents and guests.

Another major change in the community this past year has been the inclusion of a resident married couple. The Pastoral Council has long considered the possibility of providing space for retired clergy couples to live in the community, and, beginning in May, my wife Cherie and I moved into two rooms in the north residence hall. As Cherie states to our friends and family who frequently wonder what in the world we are doing, we are in “uncharted territory”, there being few if any models for this type of arrangement. Living in the Love and Mercy of Christ, we are now in the fourth month of this new development, and everyone seems to be adjusting well. I often am able to see Fr. John’s face and hear his voice during the last conversation we had with him in preparation for this move. As we concluded our conversation, he smiled and said, “This is a good thing.” We pray that his confidence will be confirmed.

Throughout all these changes we remember with St. Basil that every time is suitable for prayer and praise. In these major changes, we are experiencing the truth of the words that soon follow the passage above from Ecclesiastes, that “whatever God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it; God has done this, so that all should stand in awe before Him.” (3:14) Immersed in our Lord’s Word and His Sacraments, we live the life together he has set before us, recognizing that the concrete, visible things of this world are provided by our Creator for the purpose of eternal ends. For we have a Lord that transcends all time and nature, even death. Through Isaiah the Prophet we hear from the Lord, “I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?” (43:19). We are even provided the gift of other people not for this life only, but so that we may encourage and lead one another in the Truth of Christ toward the eternal life He intends all of us to share. Like our monastery garden, we grow and produce fruit for our time and season and, when our time is through, we wither and decay, though not unto death, as our plants do, but unto life. Given this Truth, we praise and thank God for the gifts He has given and continues to give us through Fr. Jude and Fr. John, and we

gladly move forward into the future God has laid out for us, honoring their memory and the memory of all of this community who have gone before us.

Peace,
+Jeffrey Bischoff



Fellowship Day

After having to cancel the Fellowship Day last year due to the Pandemic we are happy this year to continue the tradition of having a gathering of the Fellowship of St. Augustine and other friends in the late summer or early fall since 1956.

This year our presenter will be Pastor Marcus Felde who will guide us in “A Fresh Look at the Lord’s Prayer.” He has a D. Min. from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago and a Ph. D. from the University of Chicago. He was a missionary in Papua New Guinea for fourteen years where he was for a time Dean of Studies at Martin Luther Seminary. More recently he has served as pastor for congregations in Indiana.

All are welcome, but please let us know if you are planning to be here for the luncheon at noon.

Fellowship Day

Saturday, October 9th

Mass, 9:30 am

Lecture & discussion, 11:00 am

Luncheon, 12:45 (RSVP, please)

Gifts are gratefully acknowledged in memory of

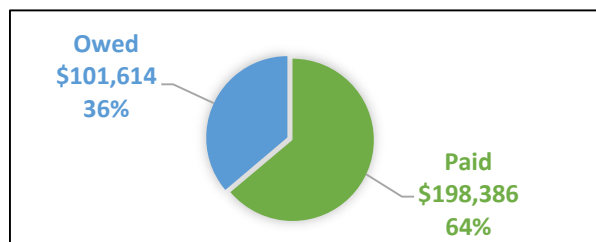
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Mortgage Partners

The monthly mortgage payment is \$3,074. You may participate for any amount from \$100 and up. We gratefully acknowledge the following donors for this past quarter: from Mrs. Barbara Spring in memory of Fr. John Cochran and of her husband Bp. Paull Spring; and from Pr. Robert Walters.



Praying the Psalms

In a recent article published in First Things (February 2021) historian Robert Louis Wilken reflects on the unique suitability of the Psalms to the interior life of prayer. The entire article may be read at www.FirstThings.com. Below are some excerpts:

[The Book of Psalms] draws on truths and images from other books of the Bible, but more than any other book, Psalms speaks the language of the heart.

What is found in the other books of the Bible recurs in a different key in the psalms. And that key, Athanasius [Bishop of Alexandria] says, is the “emotions of the soul.” In praying the psalms, one wishes not only to understand but to have one’s feelings roused and shaped by what is written there: to repent, to bear suffering, to give thanks, to rejoice. More so than other sections of the Scriptures, the psalms deal with the affections and feelings, even the passions—“My soul longs, yea, faints for the courts of the Lord” (Ps. 84:2)—the stuff of the spiritual life. One cannot

hear the texts of the psalms, wrote Augustine, “without deep feeling.” For as we pray the psalms, the words of the psalmist become our words.

Some years ago, I began to notice how often in the psalms the term “heart” appears: “My heart is firmly fixed, O God, my heart is fixed” (Ps. 57); “I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart” (Ps. 9); “My heart shall rejoice in thy salvation” (Ps. 13); “I keep the Lord always before me. . . . Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices” (Ps. 16); “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer” (Ps. 19); “Thou hast said, ‘Seek ye my face.’ My heart says to thee, ‘Thy face, Lord, do I seek’” (Ps. 27); “My heart became hot within me” (Ps. 39); “Create in me a clean heart, O God. . . . The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart thou will not despise” (Ps. 51); “Teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts to wisdom” (Ps. 90). In Psalm 119, it is the heart that moves us to keep God’s commandments: “I incline my heart to perform thy statutes.” The psalmist says not, incline the *will*, but the *heart*. Activity of the heart carries over even into our sleep: “In the night also my heart instructs me” (Ps. 16). Our hearts have you in mind while we sleep.

Praying the psalms, then, is a means of kindling love—a truth that St. Bonaventure saw with blinding clarity. If you ask how one can know God, wrote Bonaventure, seek the answer in God’s grace, not instruction; desire, not intellect; the spouse, not the teacher; God, not man; darkness, not clarity; not light but the raging fire that will bear you aloft.

The more one prays the psalms, the more one realizes one will learn nothing new. In traditional monasteries the entire psalter was prayed each week. The words and sentiments were repeated again and again, week after week. We say the psalms again and again so that their words can become our words, so that their feelings, their affections, their desires, can become our feelings, our affections, our desires.

When spoken as the prayer of the *totus Christus*, the psalms become living words that are as fresh and vivid today as when first they were written. They are the prayers of Christ, of individual believers, and of the Church enriched by the experience of myriad generations of Christians. What was—and is—the song of the people of Israel is the new song of the Church, a song that is sung not only with the lips but with the heart.



News & Notes

Since the annual chapter meeting in May the Council has been meeting more often than usual to prepare needed updates and clarifications to our constitution to present to the chapter meeting next year. The Prior is grateful to our Bishop Visitor, Matthew Riegel and the members of the Council for making their time available for these meetings.

The early part of the summer our novice, Br. Andy Chang made a month-long driving trip to the west coast to visit family and friends. Along the way he camped and hiked in several of our national parks. Returning in July he has taken over the organization of our cooking and housekeeping, most recently organizing a pantry by the kitchen.

Upon completion of his position as music director of a church in Port Huron, Daniel Susan has become our regular Sunday organist here at St. Augustine's. In this role he succeeds Edwin Holmberg, Donna Barr, and most recently Betty Jo Buss, who will continue to fill in as needed.

Since the death of Fr. John, Bp. Jeffrey has taken over the pastoral responsibilities for the sacramental life of the community. When his duties call him elsewhere we are grateful to Pr. Lloyd Buss and Pr. Philip Hemke for presiding at the Sunday Liturgy. We continue to depend on Fr. Shaun LaDuc of Church of the Advent to celebrate several of the Masses during the week and, for more occasional assistance, Pr Jacob Hanby of Caro, Michigan.

The second of the organ recital series entitled Fifth Sunday at Five was held the fifth Sunday in August. Joseph Dobos Director of Sacred Music at Saint Matthew and Saint Pius X Churches in Flint. He was assisted by trumpeter Kevin Czarnik. The next recital will be October 31st.



Br. Andy in the pantry



Br. Richard and Daniel Susan



Bp. Jeffrey in his office

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