



# SAINT AUGUSTINE'S HOUSE

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## NEWSLETTER

**Summer, A.D. 2023**

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.

✠ PAX

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” (Acts 2:42 RSV)

So began Christian community immediately after Pentecost. Believers had enjoyed fellowship with the risen Christ and one another for forty days, and over the ten days between Jesus’ Ascension and the Day of Pentecost had remained gathered together in prayer according to Jesus’ command (Lk 24:49, Acts 1:14). Now, as a result of the promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit, many more in Jerusalem had come to believe the Truth about Jesus, that the One whom they had crucified God had raised up, validating Him as the one and only Son of God who had come from God and had returned to God. Yet, though He had ascended to the right hand of the Father, this Jesus was still present in every way as the core of this nascent Christian community through the shared worship life of the community, which is the practice of the Presence of Christ.

Jesus is our core, plain and simple. Jesus is our head, Jesus is our heart. Jesus is our lifeblood, and our life itself. Not individually, but corporately. Sit with that a bit. Not individually, but corporately. Though Jesus of necessity does abide in me individually for the simple fact that I am an individual believer, Jesus’ main locus of abiding is not within me as an individual believer but in the believing community. Jesus can abide in the community without abiding in the particular individual, but Jesus cannot abide in the particular individual without abiding in the community.

This believing community at its core in human society is the man and woman in Christian marriage practicing the Presence of Christ, and the community of believers fans out from there as the man and the woman beget children and expand the believing community beyond the nuclear family. In this way, congregations are formed, neighborhoods are formed, social groups are formed, cities and states and nations are formed, all on the foundation of the nuclear family. Some may object at this point that there are people who are not currently part of a nuclear family, people who are single or



living in other types of groups that are just as valid as the nuclear family. This is true. All these other types of associations are most certainly valid. However, each one of us originated from one man and one woman and to lose sight of this fact of origin is to lose our way in our concept of community at the beginning. We begin with one man and one woman, and this is the place in society in which it is most crucial that the Presence of Christ abide.

When any Christian social group loses the practice of the Presence of Christ as its core, the group wanders into all sorts of varied activity, some beneficial and some not, losing its Christ given character as the salt of the earth. Christian congregations, for example, can be involved in all manner of socially supportive activity: providing needed food and clothing, neighborhood programs for children, pro-social activities for adults young and old, giving community members opportunities to exercise their leadership skills for the benefit of the broader community, etc. However, if the community is not faithfully obedient to Christ with Christ as its center, then all is ultimately for nothing, good as it can be for the moment, and the community is vulnerable to wandering into disobedience to Christ as it makes its own way in the world.

This happens even for monastic communities, which need to be reformed and refocused on Christ from time to time. In the Cluniac reforms, historian Jean Leclerq gives us a beautifully detailed picture of how the Holy Spirit worked through a succession of abbots to reorient the community toward Christ as its center with an abundance of fruit for both the monastic communities and the communities surrounding the monastic communities. Christian monasticism at the time had, as a whole, drifted from the practice of the Presence of Christ as its center and had become

largely secularized. Monasteries continued to do good things for themselves and the surrounding communities, but they had lost their saltiness and become largely just another social institution within the larger social order.

Leclerq reports that the reformation of the monastery began with Abbot Odo rekindling in the monks an awareness and valuation of their role in maintaining the presence in the world of the mystery of Pentecost, realizing for themselves and demonstrating for others the essential purpose of the Church: communicating the Holiness of God to persons. The central means of

this communication is the liturgy; the liturgy both of prayer and of the Mass through which the presence of Christ is made manifest in Word and Sacrament.

During and after the reforms, monasteries still performed their social functions, but they now resumed performing their social functions in a way that saving grace could be communicated both to them and through them to others. With the liturgy properly placed, the prayer of the individuals participating in the liturgy becomes a continual abnegation of the self in favor of



the common prayer, which leads the community repeatedly and continuously through the great drama of the redemptive acts of our Lord, making those acts present realities that undergird a life together of continual participation in the continuation of the ministry of Jesus Christ for the world, a ministry that Jesus Himself has conferred on His Church (Mt 28:18ff, Jn 20:21f).

Monasteries thereby become places of energizing power for the Church and examples of how Christian communities of any scope, from the basic family unit to the worldwide Church itself, can be conduits of God's Grace for the world as they maintain the liturgy of prayer and Word and Sacrament in their

midst. When members of these other communities spend days or weeks sharing the life of the monastic community, they receive an experience that they can take back to their other various communities and become an agent of change in those communities for maintaining the presence of Christ in the liturgy of prayer and Word and Sacrament at the center of those communities.

We are thankful to be such a place for our resident community and for our many regular and occasional visitors, and thankful for the supporters who respond to the leading of the Holy Spirit to make such a gift possible for the Church and the world. To God alone be the glory.

Peace,  
+Jeffrey

## News & Notes

Palm Sunday weekend we were happy to host a retreat for three local members of the Servants of the Word, an ecumenical, international Christian brotherhood of men living single for the Lord and serving him in their various occupations.



On Wednesday of Holy Week Br. Andy returned here after his prolonged visit with his parents in Korea. He immediately fit back into our monastic routine, and we now plan to receive his simple profession on St. Benedict's Day, July 11<sup>th</sup>.

A group of students and staff from Hillsdale Col-

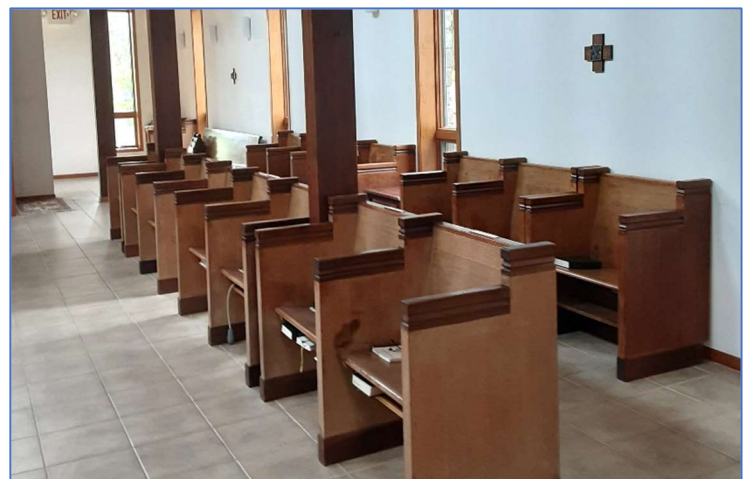
lege made a retreat here during the Easter Octave. This small, ecumenical Christian college here in Michigan is widely noted for its classical education and its independence of government funding. It draws students from all over the United States and from foreign countries.

In April our associate member, Frank McSherry spent ten days visiting family in Oklahoma and New Mexico. Frank is our longest resident associate, having moved into Brugger Hall at its completion in 2017. In addition to his faithful participation in the daily prayer offices he is largely responsible for maintaining guestrooms for retreatants.

On the afternoon of the Sixth Sunday of Easter, Br. Richard, Daniel Susan and Daniel Johnson were pleased to assist in the choir for the traditional Latin Mass celebrated at St. Matthew's Catholic Church in Flint. They chanted the Latin propers for the day and supported the choir in the ordinary parts of the Mass.



We are grateful to Sr. Elizabeth and the Dominican Sisters of Mt. Thabor for arranging the donation of choir stalls from their former monastery near Ortonville. These stalls are a perfect match to the ones we already have and their presence in our church will remind us of our long relationship with the Sisters of Mt. Thabor.



We are grateful for the provision of prompt and competent medical care for Bishop Jeffrey, who suffered a mild heart attack in Toledo during the first weekend of June. With the support of his wife Cherie, he

continues to try to “take it easy” and recover. We are thankful for God’s healing hand upon him.

The basement level of the old retreat house has long suffered from leaking and dampness. In May a new drainage system was installed on the east side of the building which we hope will alleviate the problem. This building has served us remarkably well over the years and we hope to find renewed use for it.

[www.StAugustinesHouse.org](http://www.StAugustinesHouse.org)

*Find us on Facebook.*



The group from Hillsdale College

### Upcoming Events

The next **Fifth Sunday at Five** organ recital is scheduled for **July 30th**. The featured organist will be Karl Osterland. He is Director of Music and Organist at Historic Trinity Lutheran Church, Detroit, and will be joined by a guest to offer organ and flute music. The hymn "A Mighty Fortress is Our God" will be sung by all and will include the "Grand Partita on "Ein Feste Burg" written by Mr. Osterland.

Our annual **Fellowship Day** is scheduled for Saturday, **October 14<sup>th</sup>**. Pr. Rodney L Eberhardt will be the speaker for the day. He is a member of the Society of the Holy Trinity and the former pastor of St. Luke’s Lutheran Church, Farmingdale, NY. More information about the day will be in the fall newsletter.

### Daily Prayer Schedule

<b>Vigils</b>	5:10
<b>Lauds</b>	6:00
<b>Terce</b>	8:15
On Sundays at 9:30	
<b>Holy Eucharist</b>	8:30
On Sundays at 10:00	
<b>Sext</b>	12:00
<b>None</b>	2:30
<b>Vespers</b>	6:00
<b>Compline</b>	8:30



Blessed be \* the God of Is-ra- el, al-le-lu-ia.

Gifts are gratefully acknowledged in memory of

HANS ANDREA  
 JOAN BAKER  
 ALENA BARTOLD  
 EDWARD F. BAUMAN  
 ROBERT LAKE BUCKWALTER  
 JOHN R. COCHRAN  
 JOHN GAFFNEY  
 HANS GOEBEL  
 PATRICIA A. HEINLEIN  
 JAMES HENWOOD  
 NORMAN E. NETHING  
 RICHARD SCHNIEPP

and in honor of

BRUCE MINGER  
 CHRISTOPHER ERNST TORGLER

