



SAINT AUGUSTINE'S HOUSE

3316 Draher Road, Oxford, MI 48370-2506 • 248-628-5155
office@staugustineshouse.org

NEWSLETTER

Summer, A.D. 2024

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

“These all died in faith, not having received what was promised, but having seen it and greeted it from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on earth... as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one.” (Hebrews 11:13, 16a, RSV)

Every Mass I celebrate at St. Augustine's House is a pilgrimage.

I begin with early morning preparations for the journey. There are travel clothes to make ready, food and drink to arrange, and consultation with the Guide to know the Way.

When the time comes to begin, the travel clothes are donned, prayers are offered, and an announcement is made that the journey is about to begin by the ringing of the bell. I pass through the Baptismal waters, remembering Whose I am and how He has forgiven me, and ascend to the Holy Place to show reverence for what will soon be happening there.

I then come around to the place of prayer, of listening, and of teaching. My fellow pilgrims gather around and join together in songs of praise, in hearing and reflecting, and in raising concerns to the One who can make all things new, who works all things for good for those who love Him and are called according to His Purpose. Having listened and spoken, we share His Peace and I once again ascend to the Holy Place, where I prepare the food and drink that our Lord has provided for the journey. I thank Him for His generous and Grace-filled provision of all that is needed, and wash my hands in His Innocence as I go about His Altar and sing aloud a song of thanksgiving, telling all of His wondrous deeds, especially that of giving us His own Flesh for food and His own Blood for drink, using His very own words in order to do this for the remembrance of Him. After we eat and drink, having received from Him His loving Grace, Mercy and Forgiveness, we pray in thanks and offer each other encouragement to bear the Love we have received to everyone we meet in every place we find ourselves after we leave this place. I then return from the Holy Place, remove my travel clothes, offer another prayer of thanks, and continue on in the greater pilgrimage of



the day. Greater, not in the sense of better or more important, but greater in that the pilgrimage of the Mass is contained within the overall pilgrimage of the whole day.

In the same sense, our lifetime in Christ is one overarching pilgrimage containing several smaller pilgrimages, many of which further contain their own pilgrimages. Just as the pilgrimage of the Mass is contained within the greater pilgrimage of our day at St.

Augustine's House, there are seasons of life that are their own pilgrimages. One may have a particular position at a place of work for a particular time that has its own beginning and ending, which consists of several projects that have their own beginnings and endings. St. Augustine picks up on this sense of Christian life as a pilgrimage alluded to in Hebrews 11:13ff in several places of his writings, particularly in the City of God as he contrasts Cain and Abel, one founding an earthly city while the other looked toward the heavenly.

On the other side, it is instructive to consider St. Gregory of Nyssa's criticism of pilgrimages in his day, stating if one wishes to be righteous it would be most proper to love one's neighbor as Christ commands in the Beatitudes than to take a trip to Jerusalem. Even at that early time, many Christians believed that making a pilgrimage to Jerusalem would result in greater favor for them from God. There were also many people who presented themselves as pilgrims but were only using that status to take advantage of the support of others. These pilgrimages undertaken in order to gain favor with God surely fail. However, pilgrimages undertaken under the guidance of the Holy Spirit for the sake of one's own spiritual growth and the spiritual growth of others will just as surely bear fruit. One's approach to the assorted pilgrimages of the Christian life likewise



follows. If we undertake various spiritual endeavors simply in order to gain favor with God, we will surely not gain what we are seeking. However, if all our various endeavors are ordered and guided by Him, we will not fail to find His favor in every one of them.

For true pilgrimages are not about individuals, but are about God, whom the pilgrim seeks, and all the others who are involved in the pilgrimage in one way or another. Even when we walk by ourselves, we do

not walk alone. There are others on the journey with us, both physically and spiritually, and while we walk together, we get to know one another more fully and through each other get to know God more fully. That is the Holy Spirit working among us and through us to bring us to ever deeper faith in our Lord and knowledge of Him. This is particularly true for those of us living in close community in residence

at St. Augustine's House, and we thank all of you for sharing with us in so many different ways this pilgrimage toward our heavenly home. We also invite you to share your own pilgrimage with us through letting us know how you are, how we may pray for you, and even visiting in person to spend some time with us, and be sure to bring your friends. In this way, our individual pilgrimages become truly intertwined by the Holy Spirit and we become true companions on the way.

Peace,
+Jeffrey

News and Notes

During the Easter Octave it was an added joy to welcome a group of students and staff from nearby Hillsdale College for a two-day retreat with us.

On the Fourth Sunday of Easter Dr. James Kibbie gave an organ recital here. He is Professor Emeritus at the University of Michigan, where he served for 42 years. He is internationally renowned as an authority on the organ music of Johann Sebastian Bach.

George Heldt, of Toronto, Canada, will present the next regular Fifth Sunday at Five Organ Recital here on June 30th, at 5:00 pm. A church musician since 1968, George has held church positions in Wayne and Detroit, Michigan, and Chatham and Toronto, Ontario.

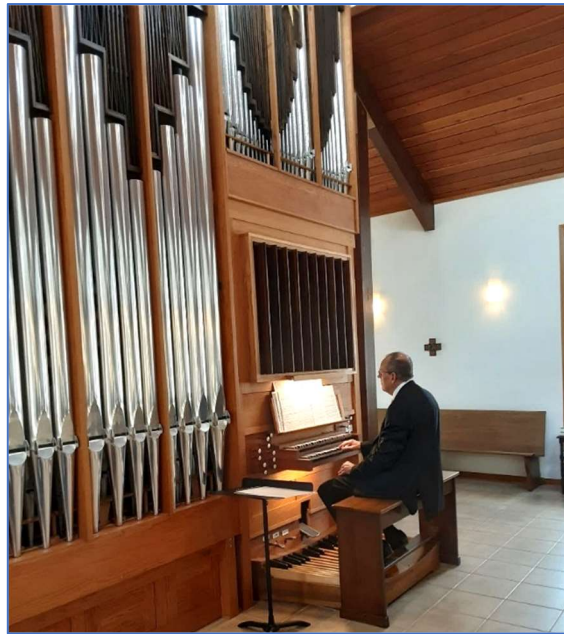
During much of the spring Br. Andy was away to assist his parents in Korea. He returned home at the beginning of June after a brief stop in California to visit his brother and family.

This spring a pair Robins decided to build their nest in a Dogwood tree beside the church and visible from several windows. This has captured the attention of both residents and guests. It evokes words from Psalm 84: "Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, at your altars, O Lord of hosts."

For those who wish to plan ahead: Fellowship Day this year is scheduled for Saturday, October 12th. More details will be announced in the fall newsletter.

www.StAugustinesHouse.org

Find us on Facebook.



Dr. James Kibbie at the organ



Robins' nest near the church

The Secret of the Psalter

The following is an excerpt from Dietrich Bonhoeffer's book Life Together:

From ancient times in the Church a special significance has been attached to the common use of psalms. ... The Psalter occupies a unique place in the Holy Scriptures. It is God's Word and, with a few exceptions, the prayer of men as well. How are we to understand this? How can God's Word be at the same time prayer to God?

This question brings with it an observation that is made by everybody who begins to use the psalms as prayers. First he tries to repeat the psalms personally as his own prayer. But soon he comes upon passages that he feels he cannot utter as his own personal petitions. We recall, for example, the psalms of innocence, the bitter, the imprecatory psalms, and also in part the psalms of the Passion. And yet these prayers are words of Holy Scripture which a believing Christian cannot simply dismiss as outworn and obsolete, as "early stages of religion." One

may have no desire to carp at the Word of the Scriptures and yet he knows that he cannot pray these words. He can read and hear them as the prayer of another person, wonder about them, be offended by them, but he can neither pray them himself nor discard them from the Bible.

The practical expedient would be to say that any person in this situation should first stick to the psalms he can understand and repeat, and that in the case of other psalms he should learn quite simply to let stand

what is incomprehensible and difficult and turn back again and again to what is simple and understandable. Actually, however, this difficulty indicates the point at which we get our first glimpse of the secret of the Psalter. A psalm that we cannot utter as a prayer, that makes us falter and horrifies us, is a hint to us that here Someone else is praying, not we; that the One who is here protesting his innocence, who is invoking God's judgement, who has come to such infinite depths of suffering, is none other than Jesus Christ himself. He it is who is praying here, and not only here but in the whole Psalter.



This insight the New Testament and the Church have always recognized and declared. The Man Jesus Christ, to whom no affliction, no ill, no suffering is alien and who yet was the wholly innocent and righteous one, is praying in the Psalter through the mouth of his Church. The Psalter is the prayer book of Jesus Christ in the truest sense of the word. He prayed the Psalter and now it has become his prayer for all time. Now do we understand how the Psalter can be prayer to God and yet God's own Word, precisely because here we encounter the praying Christ? Jesus Christ prays through the Psalter in his congregation. His congregation prays too, the individual prays. But here he prays, in so far as Christ prays within him, not in his own name, but in the Name of Jesus Christ. He prays, not from the natural desires of his own heart; he prays out of the manhood put on by Christ; he prays on the basis of the prayer of the Man Jesus Christ. But when he so acts, his prayer falls within the promise that it will be heard. Because Christ prays the prayer of the psalm with the individual and the congregation before the heavenly throne of God, or rather because those who pray the psalm are joining in with the prayer of Jesus Christ, their prayer reaches the ears of God. Christ has become their intercessor.

The Psalter is the vicarious prayer of Christ for his Church. Now that Christ is with the Father, the new humanity of Christ, the Body of Christ on earth,

continues to pray his prayer to the end of time. This prayer belongs, not to the individual member, but to the whole Body of the Christ. Only in the whole Christ does the whole Psalter become a reality, a whole which the individual can never fully comprehend and call his own. That is why the prayer of the psalms belongs in a peculiar way to the fellowship. Even if a verse or a psalm is not one's own prayer, it is nevertheless

the prayer of another member of the fellowship so it is quite certainly the prayer of the true Man Jesus Christ and his Body on earth.

Gifts are gratefully acknowledged in memory of

JOHN R. COCHRAN
 GILBERT E. DOAN, JR.
 PATRICIA A. HEINLEIN
 STELLA B. KOENE
 ARTHUR CARL KREINHEDER
 PAUL KOKENDA
 KEVIN NEEDLE
 CAROL ELIZABETH REHRAUER
 CARLAND and BETTY STEPHAN
 GILL JAMES STEVENS
 GILL S. and ANGELIA STEVENS
 BARBARA SUSAN

and in honor of

FREDERICK JOHNSEN
 CHRISTOPHER ERNST TORGLER
 MARCEL ALEXANDER YODER

