



SAINT AUGUSTINE'S HOUSE

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NEWSLETTER

Fall, 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

On Christmas Day 2021 the James Web Space Telescope was launched. With its larger mirror and advanced technology, it was soon sending back startlingly beautiful images of distant galaxies and other objects in the universe. It has greatly expanded our understanding of the enormous magnitude and incomprehensible complexity of the universe which surrounds us. The number of stars and galaxies and their distribution over unimaginable distances is truly awe inspiring.

But it can also be intimidating. As our understanding of the size and complexity of the universe increases there can be corresponding diminishment of our small planet earth and of the uniqueness of the life that lives upon it. Sometimes it seems that there is a certain satisfaction taken in downplaying humanity's status in the universe. Carl Sagan, a noted popularizer of modern cosmology has said: "Our planet is a lonely speck in the great enveloping cosmic dark." He expresses this elsewhere in more detail: "we live on an insignificant planet of a humdrum star lost in a galaxy tucked away in some forgotten corner of a universe in which there are far more galaxies than people." Compare this with the attitude of grateful wonder expressed in Psalm 8: "When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you have established; what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?"

Something that the theologian Hans Urs von Bathasar wrote I find helpful when contemplating extreme celestial distances. He said, "There is distance from earth to heaven, but there is no distance from heaven to earth." In other words, to paraphrase St. Peter: with the Lord a thousand light years are as one small step (cf. 2 Pet. 3:8). If the vast abyss of space and time is not a problem for God, it need not be for us.

Another way of thinking of outer space is offered by C. S. Lewis in his Space Trilogy. Although interstellar space appears to us as empty, cold, and lifeless he depicts it as filled with angels busily carrying out their assigned ministries. I must admit that the first image that came to mind was of typical baroque Christmas angels, winged feminine forms in flowing gowns holding various musical instruments. The idea of them fluttering about space was a charming one but also rather absurd. Lewis' conception of angels is more serious and biblical than that. Angels appear in various guises but essentially are amorphous, the sometime startling and frightening spirit messengers of God; they are the "mighty ones who do his



word” (Ps. 103). The point is that the cosmos is the domain of God; it is not empty, hostile or sterile but, is filled with the ministers of his will and purpose.

On a clear, moonless night it is a thrilling experience to gaze up and see the sky seamlessly filled with stars upon stars forming the “firmament” of heaven just over our heads. (Alas, an experience denied to those of us who live in or near large cities.) At such times it is easier to share Lewis’ vision. The biblical expression “the hosts of heaven” is somewhat ambiguous and can mean the stars or the angels. At any rate, at such a moment the stars do become angels, messengers from God. And perhaps we can hear within the reassuring angelic message: “Do not be afraid!”

Modern cosmogeny and the Darwinian evolution are materialist. Everything begins and ends with matter. In the beginning there was matter and then after a long time some matter randomly combines in complex ways until it becomes living. Then after a long time some of this living matter may become intelligent and self-aware. Faith and reason teach just the opposite: Life, spirit, purpose, love precede matter in the order of being. Life, human life, is not an accidental afterthought in the universe, an epiphenomenon, an unexpected bonus attached to physical existence; it is rather the purpose for which material creation exists. The first words of the Bible express this with straightforward eloquence: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

If the ancient and biblical account of creation seems naïve, we need to arrive at a second naïveté. Or perhaps a second Copernican revolution. Ancient cosmology, reflected also in the Scriptures, held that the earth was the center around which all the heavenly bodies revolved. Then the Copernican revolution proved that the earth revolved around the Sun. Now our Sun has been further demoted to the outskirts of one galaxy among many others. Yet in a far more important way we *are* the center of the universe. We are the center of intelligence, inquiry, awareness. Only here are the stars and galaxies called by name, are the stars arranged in constellations, does the night sky inspire poetry and are telescopes built to see even more. Only here are the mysteries of life and love and death pondered and



searching eyes raised upward and outward in prayer. We are the rational and spiritual center of the universe, its beating heart.

The noted physicist Stephen Hawkins was of the opinion that intelligent life in the universe would be very rare and that, as of now, we have received no credible sign or evidence of other intelligent life. Nevertheless, he felt it would be “arrogant” to believe that our earth was the only

place in the universe to harbor intelligent life. I would suggest that arrogance is not the only response to this reality; wonder, humility, gratitude, reverence would be other possible and more appropriate responses. As far as we know (follow the science, as they say) we *are* the only intelligent life in the universe, and it was created to be our home. God made a whole universe just for us, a cosmic Garden of Eden in which to place his human creatures.

We are the song leaders of the universe. As in ancient times so also now our role is to summon the cosmos to adoration of the Creator.

Praise the Lord from the heavens,
Praise him in the heights!

Praise him, all his angels,
Praise him, all his host!

Praise him, sun and moon,
Praise him, all you shining stars!

Praise him, you highest heavens! (Ps. 148)

In Christo,
Br. Richard

Fifth Sunday at Five

Organ Recital

With David Enos

September 29th at 5:00 pm

News and Notes

Bishop Jeffrey was pleased to attend the Annual Synod of the Lutheran Church-International (LC-I) in mid-June, held this year at the Guest House of St. Meinrad's Archabbey in St. Meinrad, Indiana. Bishop Jeffrey serves as secretary of the denomination, so was quite busy supporting the business of the Synod. To help the LC-I explore what it means to be an evangelical catholic church body, Fr. Paddy Rooney, Senior of the Society of the Holy Trinity, gave a presentation exploring the nuances of 21st century evangelical catholicism. Organist Dr. Frederick Hohman, who served as the organist for the Synod, also gave a delightful Bach concert on the organ in the chapel in St. Anselm Hall. In case you were wondering, Bishop Jeffrey did indeed make the trip by motorcycle.

Cherie was away for a few weeks in June and July while traveling in Morocco, Italy and Iceland with her daughter and granddaughters. Their international and intercontinental excursions were safe, broadening, and enlightening, especially for Cherie experiencing Moroccan hospitality. Caring for the stranger is one of the highest forms of charity.

George Heldt was the featured organist on June 30th in our ongoing series of Fifth Sunday at Five organ recitals. The next in the series will be on September 29th at 5:00 p.m. with David Enos as organist. All are invited and admission is free.

A new sign has been installed at our Draher Road entrance. (see cover) A smaller matching sign indicating the Brugger Hall entrance has also been installed to assist first time visitors in finding their way around.



The annual Fellowship Day will be held this year on Saturday, October 12th beginning at 9:30 a.m. with the Holy Eucharist. The program this year will be a Hymn Sing and our own organist, Daniel John



Daniel Susan and George Heldt

Susan, will be the presenter. Various hymns will be introduced with a spoken history and musical prelude before being sung by the assembly. Daniel has studied organ and music at the University of North Texas and at Henderson State University and has a long career as a church organist.

Our thanks to our good neighbors Brad and Julie Froelich for maintaining our lawns and grounds this summer. We could not have kept up without their help.

www.StAugustinesHouse.org

Find us on Facebook.

Daily Prayer Schedule

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



My soul * magnifies the Lord, al-le-lu-ia.



abundant food for men and animals and all the living things on it without reluctance and without any violation of what he has arranged.

Yet unexplored regions of the abysses and inexpressible realms of the deep are subject to his laws. The mass of the boundless sea, joined together by his ordinance in a single expanse, does not overflow its prescribed limits but flows as he commanded it. For he said: "Thus far shall you come, and your waves will be halted here." The ocean, impassable for men, and the worlds beyond it are governed by the same edicts of the Lord.

Gifts are gratefully acknowledged in memory of

JOHN R. COCHRAN
JAMES and JOAN FACKLER
RUTH ANN FOUTS
HANS GOEBEL
SUSAN (FISHER-LEWIS) MOESER
VICKI (STAKER) MOESER
BRIAN LEO OLSON
WALTER SADOWNICZAK

and in honor of

DEVIN MARTIN ANDREWS
LLOYD and BETTY JO BUSS

The Creator's Provenance

*From a letter to the Corinthians by St. Clement of Rome
(late first century).*

Let us fix our gaze on the Father and Creator of the whole world, and let us hold on to his peace and blessing, his splendid and surpassing gifts. Let us contemplate him in our thoughts and with our mind's eye reflect upon the peaceful and restrained unfolding of his plan; let us consider the care with which he provides for the whole of his creation.

By his direction the heavens are in motion, and they are subject to him in peace. Day and night fulfill the course he has established without interfering with each other. The sun, the moon and the choirs of stars revolve in harmony at his command in their appointed paths without deviation. By his will the earth blossoms in the proper seasons and produces



Fellowship Day

Saturday, October 12th

Mass, 9:30 am

Hymn Sing, 11:00 am

Luncheon, 12:30 (RSVP)