



# SAINT AUGUSTINE'S HOUSE

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## NEWSLETTER

Fall, A.D. 2025

✠ 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.

During the summer months we often open the windows of the church to allow the cool morning air to fill the church before closing them mid-morning. This form of natural air conditioning has the added benefit of allowing the songs of awaking birds in the surrounding trees to add their songs to ours in the church as darkness gradually gives way to a new day. It seems for both birds and monks the day's first order of business is to sing, they with their calls and songs and we with our ancient psalms. Something like this must also have been true in the Temple at Jerusalem as we can gather from Psalm 84: "Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself...at your altars, O Lord of hosts." Perhaps the birds also are included in the subsequent blessing: "Blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise."

We associate the songs of birds with attracting mates or with what appears to us as spontaneous, impromptu expressions of joy. But it is more complicated than that. Bird songs can also function to mark out territory and to threaten and ward off intruders or rivals. What sounds so pleasant to us may sound like war cries to other birds.

So it is with the 150 psalms that comprise the Psalter; they are complex poems that address a variety of needs and circumstances. The Book of Psalms is called *Tihillim* in Hebrew which means "Praises." But anyone who has prayed through the psalms knows that this label is incomplete. Besides praise there are history, lament, instruction, confession, liturgical hymns—and imprecations, that is, curses against enemies and evildoers. This last category is surprising to many Christians and can be disturbing when first encountered.

Here is where the birds come in. When birds sing their warning songs, they announce their presence and their claim to a certain space and their determination to defend it. The song is meant to fend off the need for a more serious physical confrontation. It seeks protection from rivals or predators more than it plots aggression against them. This can be a way in which to interpret the curses found in the psalms. To sing the psalms is to announce our own



territorial claim that the Kingdom of God is at hand. We pray that His will be done on earth as in heaven and we rebuke all the powers of evil which oppose this.

When I have been asked by guests about the “curse psalms” I sometimes reply, “remember, a curse is a prayer.” Of course, I am not speaking here of “cussing” for emphasis but of the imprecations embedded within the psalms. Here a curse is a verbal wish or request consciously directed to God. It is not a personal act of retaliation undertaken by ourselves, but just the opposite; it is taking the matter out of our own hands and placing it in the hands of God the just judge. It is heeding the exhortation of St. Paul, “Beloved, never avenge yourselves...for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord’” (Rom 12:19). An imprecation, as with all prayers, must also be concluded and qualified by “not my will but thine be done.” Understood thus the curse can have a cathartic effect that loosens the grip fear and anger can have on us.

Beyond that, adversity and even punishment can often be a blessing. Perhaps in our own lives there have been harsh, painful events or corrections which we see now as blessings in disguise. The psalmist admits, “It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes” (Ps 119:71). This can also be true in the lives of others who have harmed or maltreated us or other people. Calling for the just punishment of evildoers can bring about their repentance and reformation. Indeed, in the psalms sometimes the “curse” seems to be more what we would call “instant karma,” e.g., “Let the net which they hid ensnare them” (Ps 35:8).

In Psalm 62 the author complains of his duplicitous friends that they “bless with their mouths, while inwardly they curse.” Perhaps we can reverse this and turn it into a holy duplicity in which we curse with our mouths, while inwardly we bless. An imprecatory

Psalm can be prayed as a form of “tough love” which includes hope for repentance, conversion and reconciliation.

There is evidence in the New Testament that our Lord and the apostles prayed the psalms. In the Acts of the Apostles (1:15ff) St. Peter alludes to two imprecatory psalms to interpret the betrayal and death of Judas and to assert the need to elect another disciple to replace him among the Twelve. The living word of God, even a curse, can widen and enlarge in meaning. The imprecatory psalms are not prayed in isolation from subsequent revelation in Scripture; they

must always be tempered by the Sermon on the Mount.

Why pray the imprecatory psalms at all? Anger in and of itself is not sinful: “be angry but do not sin” (Eph 4:26). It can even be appropriate and righteous in the face of blatant injustice or, as too often in the news today, of senseless, cruel acts of violence. Commentary in the new Ignatius Catholic Study Bible reminds us that “prayer is precisely where people can be fully transparent about their feelings without fear of reprimand or rejection. Pain is

real, and evil is real. And God is uniquely able to heal the wounds that others inflict on our lives. The imprecatory psalms show us that one can approach the Lord even in the heat of anger and with strong desires for recompense” (p. 927). As Christians we are called upon to recognize and confront evil and to resist the Evil One firm in our faith (cf. 1 Pet 5:9). The imprecatory psalms remind us of the seriousness of this struggle and express our confidence that evil will not have the last word.

Both birds and men live in a world in which danger and evil are real. Bird songs and the ancient psalms of Zion challenge this reality.

In Christo,  
Br. Richard



## News and Notes

In June Bp. Jeffrey and Cherie attended the Annual Synod of the Lutheran Church—International in Maryland. During the synod he participated in the consecration of Pr. Rodney Eberhardt as Bishop of the LC-I Southern Diocese. Bp Eberhardt was a classmate of Br. Richard at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

Grayson Bush from Texas spent two weeks on retreat with us in preparation for his beginning year at Concordia Seminary, Fort Wayne Indiana. He was a faithful participant in the daily prayers and we are happy to have had a part in his preparation for the holy ministry.

Br. Andy is an avid bicyclist, and he has enrolled us in the Warm Showers Network. Bicyclists who are passing through our area can contact us and ask to spend the night (and take a warm shower) before continuing on their way. Through this connection we have met a variety of interesting and engaging people, both young and old. Most recently we hosted three students who were bicycling from the northeast on their way back to school in Minnesota.

Our thanks to those who volunteered their labor for the upkeep of our grounds and property this summer: David Strubler, his son Matthew, Bill Rock, Daniel Lord-Kniveton and, as always, our volunteer property manager, Brad Froehlich.

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

*Find us on Facebook.*

Gifts are gratefully acknowledged in memory of

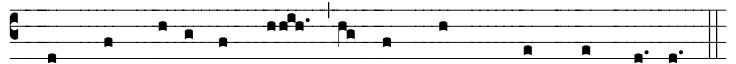
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GILL and ANGELA STEVENS  
GILL JAMES STEVENS



*Grayson Bush in the Library*

## 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



Let my spirit re-joice in the Lord God my Savior.

## *Fellowship Day*

*Saturday, October 11th  
Holy Eucharist, 9:30 am  
Lecture & discussion, 11:00 am  
Luncheon, 12:45 (RSVP)*

## Fellowship Day

The annual Fellowship Day will be held this year on Saturday, October 11<sup>th</sup>. The day will begin with the celebration of the Holy Eucharist at 9:30 in the morning. This will be followed by a time for coffee and visiting. The formal presentation will begin at 11:00. The lecturer is the Rev. Patrick J. Rooney STS, CRJ. His topic is entitled “The Centrality of the Consecrated Life in the Church Today.”

Pastor Rooney is a retired Lutheran clergyman having served parishes in central Pennsylvania, with ten additional years in a Roman Catholic religious order. He is a founding member of the Society of the Holy Trinity, a Lutheran Order and Ministerium. Since 2015 he has served as Senior (Superior General) of the Society. He is a native of England and completed his undergraduate studies at St. Mary’s College, London; studied philosophy in America; has a master’s degree in counseling from Shippensburg University and completed his Lutheran studies at Gettysburg Seminary.

A luncheon will follow the lecture and discussion at approximately 12:45. The event and luncheon are free and open to all, but please let us know if you are coming so we can prepare accordingly.



*Br. Andy with visiting bicyclists*

## Organ Recital

featuring

## Dave Wagner

Dr. Dave of WRCJ-FM

**St. Augustine’s House**

**Sunday, October 12<sup>th</sup>**

**3:00 P.M.**

## Vesper Hymn

O Trinity of blessed light,  
O Unity of princely might,  
The fiery sun now goes his way;  
Shed thou within our hearts thy ray.

To thee our morning song of praise,  
To thee our evening prayer we raise;  
O grant us with thy saints on high  
To praise thee through eternity.

