



SAINT AUGUSTINE'S HOUSE

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NEWSLETTER

Lent, A.D. 2026

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

Recently I read that some Christians do not use the Lord's Prayer regularly in their public worship. They believe that prayer should always be free and spontaneous and that using a set pattern of words, even ones so revered as the Lord's Prayer, can restrict the work of the Spirit. They believe that when the Lord introduced his prayer with the words "pray then like this" he meant that he was giving the disciples an outline or pattern for praying rather than a prayer as such.

There is some truth to this. Even we who do pray the Our Father in a set form are aware that the Gospels give us two slightly different versions of the prayer: the longer version in Matthew (6:9-13) and the shorter one in Luke (11:2-4). This might suggest that our Lord imparted his teaching on prayer more than once and used different words to do so. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the words we usually recite as the Lord's Prayer do not conform precisely to either biblical version.

Be that as it may, throughout Church history, and in most of the languages of the world, Christians have recited the Lord's Prayer as a set form of verbal prayer in their public liturgies and in their private devotions. This does not preclude its use as a model that teaches us how to pray in other contexts and with other words. There are numerous examples of this from the early church fathers down to our own day. (See the passage from St. Augustine below.)

The frequent use of these words need not be the "heaping up of empty phrases" that our Lord condemns just before he gives us his model prayer (Mt. 6:7). Instead, we should remember the words of St. Paul to the Galatians (4:6): "God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" This prayer is dynamic. It is animated by the Spirit, it unites us to the only begotten Son, and it makes us adopted sons and daughters who address the God of heaven as *our* Father.

This "Spirit of his Son" is emphasized in our daily prayer offices when the Lord's Prayer is preceded by the threefold *Kyrie eleison*, either in Greek or in English, "Lord have mercy." This acclamation is addressed to Christ and invokes his presence and authority as we dare to call upon God intimately as our Father. This is another reminder that we are praying this prayer only as Christ's adopted brothers and sisters.



St. Benedict in his rule prescribes the Lord's Prayer at the end of each of the day hours of prayer (RB 13). This is in addition to its use in the Holy Eucharist before communion. At the Little Hours during the day, it is prayed silently; at Lauds and Vespers it is to be sung aloud. His reason for this is that "thorns of contention are likely to spring up." So the monks, "warned by the pledge they make to one another in the words of this prayer: Forgive us as we forgive, . . . may cleanse themselves of this kind of vice." When I first read these words, I was a little disappointed to find the monastic father proposing the Lord's Prayer for such a pragmatic purpose as keeping his monks in line. Much later it occurred to me that in Matthew's gospel this is precisely the petition our Lord himself emphasizes when at the end of his prayer he adds: "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you. . . ." The prayer that begins "*Our Father*" also reveals the concrete implications of this relationship for our conduct toward others.



The communal character of the Lord's Prayer can be expressed in another way: it can be prayed as an intercession for other people. Instead of praying with a general application in mind we pray for specific persons: that God's name be hallowed in *their* lives and circumstances, that His Kingdom come to *them* and his will be done in and for *them*, and so on. In this way, for example, we could pray an Our Father for each member of our family, and it would be a different, "personalized" prayer each time. This might be something to remember when people ask us to pray for them, and we assure them vaguely with our "thoughts and prayers." To answer instead, "I will pray the Lord's Prayer for you," is a concrete promise we can objectively fulfill. Perhaps this may also suggest to the individual a way they can pray for themselves. The prayer immediately reorders our priorities; it first lifts our eyes to our Father in heaven and only then works its way down to our proximate problems and concerns.

This brings us to the seventh and last petition of the Lord's Prayer: "But deliver us from evil." In the Small Catechism of Martin Luther, with which I grew up, he writes: "We pray in this petition as the sum of all, that our Father in heaven would deliver us from every evil of body and soul," and "when our last hour has come, grant us a

blessed end." As St. Augustine observed earlier, this petition "has a wide application."

I have seized upon this explanation of the final petition, "as the sum of all," for another reason. St. Benedict exhorts us to pray "in such a way that our minds are in harmony with our voices" (RB 19). When I come to the end of the Lord's Prayer and realize I have not been praying with my mind, I try to at least pray this last petition attentively and so in some sense recover the whole prayer.

We conclude the Lord's prayer with the doxology, "For thine is the kingdom, . . ." The use or disuse of this was often considered a distinction between Catholics and Protestants. However, growing up with Martin Luther's Small Catechism which does not include the doxology in his explanation of the Our Father, I knew this was not so rigid and that use of the doxology could be optional. Nowadays it is widely recognized that the doxology is not found in the oldest and best manuscripts of the Gospels. It does, however, have a long tradition and may have been spontaneously added by early Christians in their liturgies. It is, in fact, a beautiful and even artful conclusion that resonates with the first three petitions. Now in the form of praise, the coming of his kingdom is recognized, the power of his will affirmed, and the glory of his holy name acknowledged. Amen.

In Christo,
Br. Richard

St. Augustine on Prayer

In a letter on prayer to the elderly widow Proba St. Augustine provides his own explanation of the Lord's Prayer:

We need to use words [in prayer] so that we may remind ourselves to consider carefully what we are asking, not so that we may think we can instruct the Lord or prevail on him.

Thus, when we say: "Hallowed be your name," we are reminding ourselves to desire that his name, which in fact is always holy, should also be considered holy among men. I mean that it should not be held in contempt. But this is a help for men, not for God.

And as for our saying: "Your kingdom come," it will surely come whether we will it or not. But we are stirring

up our desires for the kingdom so that it can come to us and we can deserve to reign there.

When we say: “Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” we are asking him to make us obedient so that his will may be done in us as it is done in heaven by his angels.

When we say: “Give us this day our daily bread,” in saying this day we mean “in this world.” Here we ask for a sufficiency by specifying the most important part of it; that is, we use the word “bread” to stand for everything. Or else we are asking for the sacrament of the faithful, which is necessary in this world, not to gain temporal happiness but to gain the happiness that is everlasting.

When we say: “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us,” we are reminding ourselves of what we must ask and what we must do in order to be worthy in turn to receive.

When we say: “Lead us not into temptation,” we are reminding ourselves to ask that his help may not depart from us; otherwise we could be seduced and consent to some temptation, or despair and yield to it.

When we say: “Deliver us from evil,” we are reminding ourselves to reflect on the fact that we do not yet enjoy the state of blessedness in which we shall suffer no evil. This is the final petition contained in the Lord’s Prayer, and it has a wide application. In this petition the Christian can utter his cries of sorrow, in it he can shed his tears, and through it he can begin, continue and conclude his prayer, whatever the distress in which he finds himself. Yes, it was very appropriate that all these truths should be entrusted to us to remember in these very words.

Gifts are gratefully acknowledged in memory of

ERNIE and MARY LOU BAKER
BERNARD and ELEANOR BUCZEK
JOHN R. COCHRAN
CLARENCE and MARGARET HOEME
TOM KNUTSON
PAUL KOKENDA
ARTHUR CARL KREINHEDER
DONALD MOTAKA
BRIAN OLSON
RALPH SCHULTZ
KEN SMITH

and in honor of

JAMES and JULIE SEELEY
CHRISTOPHER TORGLER

News and Notes

Last fall Br. Andy took up the hobby of roasting raw coffee beans, which is more of an art than it might seem. Lately he has been serving the fruits of his labor at the coffee hour after church on Sunday and other times as well. In this season of Lenten renewal it reminds us in a spiritual sense to “wake up and smell the coffee!”

We recently enjoyed a visit from Fr. John Martin and Br. Zacharia from St. Benedict’s Monastery our Roman Catholic neighbors just down the street. Br. Zacharia is a new novice and Fr. John Martin wanted to introduce him. We have enjoyed a long and friendly relationship with the monks going back to the time of Fr. Arthur.

www.StAugustinesHouse.org

Find us on Facebook.



Br. Andy and Bp. Jeffrey



Fr. John Martin and Br. Zacharia

Selah House in Detroit

For more than a decade, Billy and Sarah Mark have been faithful retreatants at Saint Augustine's House. As Detroit-based artists, they first came drawn by the monastic rhythm of prayer and work, carrying a hope: to transform their four-unit building into a home where artists could share life rooted in contemplation and creativity.

In those early years, Billy's weekly coffee conversations with Father John became a steady source of encouragement. Father John affirmed the vision of an "artist monastery," and his wisdom continues to echo in the life that has since unfolded.

Today, that vision has taken shape as The Selah House, a community of artists rooted in the liberating way of Jesus. Located within Detroit's historic Piety Hill neighborhood, The Selah House sits at the heart of a longstanding intentional Christian community spanning a three-by-eight block footprint. For decades, neighbors have gathered in one another's homes, breaking bread, praying together, sharing resources, and seeking to love their neighbors well, inspired by the early Church in Acts. In recent years, homes once boarded and vacant have been restored by those committed to a faithful presence in the city. The Selah House is both a physical place, four apartments and the tiny house that once rested in the woods at St. Augustine's House, and a wider network of artists living nearby and across Detroit who share in its contemplative, creative life rooted in Christ.

Deeply inspired by the monastic tradition, Billy and Sarah have crafted a simple Rule of Life and shared values to guide their common life. Centered on Jesus-shaped hospitality, sacred rest and creative freedom, mutual support, and committed honesty, their Rule offers a framework for integrating contemplation and creation. It is not a rigid code, but a liberating rhythm, beginning with rest, creating without pressure, and engaging deeply with God and one another.

In the attic chapel, they gather daily for prayer shaped by the contemplative Christian tradition and the chanting of the Psalms. Morning Lectio Divina, midday Centering Prayer, and evening Ignatian Examen form the daily

rhythm. Drawing from the liturgy of The Office, and with thoughtful contributions from fellow retreatant David Johnson, their prayers echo throughout the wider Church while remaining distinctly their own. These times of prayer are open to the broader community.

Even as they cultivate this urban expression of monastic-inspired life, Billy and Sarah continue to return regularly to Saint Augustine's House for solitude, silence, and renewal in nature. We give thanks for the ways this place has helped nurture their vocation, and for the ongoing bonds between our communities.

To learn more about The Selah House or to support their ministry, visit www.selahhousedetroit.org.

—Sarah Mark



Sarah and Billy Mark

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

Holy Week Liturgies

Maundy Thursday, April 2nd	6:00 p.m.
<i>Mass of the Lord's Supper, Washing of Feet</i>	
Good Friday, April 3rd	4:30 p.m.
<i>Solemn Liturgy; St. John's Passion Narrative</i>	
Holy Saturday, April 4th	8:30 p.m.
<i>Vigil and First Mass of Easter</i>	