**Augustinian Monks of the Primitive Observance**

**Mother of the Good Shepherd Monastery**

**2075 Mercers Fernery Road**

**DeLand, FL, 32720**

**Tel: (386) 736-4321**

**Email: monks@augustinianmonks.com**

**www:augustinianmonks.com**

October 25, 2017

Memorial of Saint John Stone, Augustinian Priest and Martyr

Dear Family and Friends,

Praised be Jesus Christ!

This letter is long delayed! It was started in early September, before Hurricane Irma came through DeLand, blowing down large trees and leaving the area without electricity, water, or Internet access for a week or more. In our own case our telephones and Internet were not restored for two weeks after our electricity came back on. Living in Florida can certainly be a challenge!

When I began this letter to you, it was only a few days after we celebrated the memory and legacy of the saint in the Church that we always refer to as our Holy Father St. Augustine. It was on August 28, 430 A.D., that Augustine gave back his soul to God and at the age of 76 completed his earthly pilgrimage.

When I was discerning a monastic vocation I was privileged to have the good counsel and aid of Father Raphael Simon, OCSO, a monk and priest of St. Joseph’s Abbey in Spencer, Massachusetts. Father was a convert to the Catholic faith from Judaism and was a psychiatrist. He said to me during one of our meetings, “I truly feel, Father, you have a call from God to the monastic life, and so I would suggest that in prayer you call upon your heavenly friends to help you discern what tradition and holy rule you will follow.” I have always loved our doctrine of the communion of saints and had many friends I admired. There was Benedict, whose Rule was well known to me, and I respected this wonderful gift in the Church, but the Rule was his only written record. There were also the Rule of St. Basil, the Rule of St. Albert and some others that attracted me, but when it came to Augustine, I found that it was not only the Rule, but so many of the writings of the Doctor of Grace that seemed to set my heart on fire when I read them. After delving more deeply into monasticism I came to realize that St. Augustine’s monastic life and Rule truly comprised the oldest developed form of monastic life in the western Church. St. Benedict, as we know, is often called the father of western monasticism, but Benedict wasn’t even born until 50 years after the death of our beloved Bishop of Hippo. Furthermore, what truly captured my heart was the deep, manly love Augustine felt for God. It seemed to me that at the time of his conversion the Holy Spirit took all the passionate love Augustine had for others and re-directed it to falling in love with God. This man, I knew then, was to be my mentor, my monastic guide and indeed my spiritual father.

Part of our own calling as Augustinian Monks is to live the holy Rule of St. Augustine as he envisioned and to live the monastic life that was his first love. God’s divine providence called Augustine, after only three years of living his vision of monastic life, to be taken out of the total separation from the world and to assume the duty and obligation of being a bishop. To the best of his ability he strove to keep his heart a monastic one, but from the time of his ordination the active apostolic life would be his. Let me share with you the prayer we sing or say after professing our final vows, this prayer of Augustine that I pray will enlighten you to Augustine’s monastic heart.

You alone do I love, you alone do I follow, you alone do I seek. I am prepared to serve only you, because you alone govern justly, and I wish to be under your rule. I ask that only in your great mercy you convert me wholly to yourself and allow nothing to prevent me from coming to you. Grant that while I live, I may be temperate, strong, just, and prudent, in love with your wisdom and capable of understanding, worthy of your blessed kingdom, and one day a dweller in that Kingdom.

St. Augustine, Monk, Bishop and Doctor of the Church

Raffle news

Congratulations to the winners of our last raffle! The first prize winner of three nights in Orlando was Rae K. Hauck; second prize, a gift certificate for $100.00 to Bed, Bath & Beyond, went to Mark Tylec; finally, the gas certificate went to Pat & Joanne Gagliardi. Thanks to everyone who participated!

For our new raffle, the first prize is a $125 gift certificate to Omaha Steaks; second prize is a $100 gift certificate to Olive Garden; third prize is a $40 gas certificate. Once again we are enclosing a sheet of tickets, which you are welcome to duplicate. If possible, please do cut the tickets yourself as it is very helpful to us. Please remember to write your name and contact information on each ticket. We ask a donation of $3 per ticket or $5 for two. The drawing will be on the First Sunday of Advent, December 3rd.

Shopping for charity

For those of you who shop on Amazon, we have a new way that you can help the Monastery with no cost to you: If you go to Amazon Smile (the web address is **smile.amazon.com**), you will be prompted to select a charity, and if you select the Augustinian Monks of the Primitive Observance then Amazon will donate a small percentage of their profit to us. Even small purchases can add up, and every little bit can help us.

Retirement

It is with immense gratitude and a great deal of sadness that we bid farewell to Dennis DiLoreto, who has helped us in countless ways through the past nine years. He has taken care of our grounds, fixed our telephone and computer problems, answered innumerable questions about the Internet, repaired various mechanical devices whenever something broke down, built a house for our chickens, tended to our animals, and generally done just about anything as needs arose. Dennis spent almost a decade of his retirement working on our property and now has retired from us! Our property will miss his loving care and vast knowledge, while we will miss most of all his good nature and friendship—and we hope that he will still come around from time to time.

The departed

These days it seems that every letter contains news of more deaths. Since our last letter to you, we lost a dear friend of our Monastery. Mother Mary Gabriel, S.S.E.W., foundress and superior of the Sister Servants of the Eternal Word in Birmingham, Alabama, died in July. May she rest in peace.

The Holy Souls

We will be praying for all your deceased loved ones on the 2nd of November, All Souls Day, and during the entire month of the Holy Souls.

Good news

We do have some wonderful news for you! On the Solemnity of our Mother of Consolation, Monday September 4, we received the Oblation of Deacon Kurt Alypius of St. Augustine Slafkovsky, Ob.O.S.A.Prim., and on the Feast of the Archangels Michael, Gabriel and Raphael, we received a novice Oblate, Matthew Elias of Our Mother of Grace and Saint Nicholas of Tolentine Endebrock.

We are also thrilled to let you know that on the first Saturday of Advent, December 9, at 1:00 p.m., our local bishop, His Excellency, the Most Reverend John G. Noonan,D. D. will preside at the consecration of our Chapel—the Oratory of Mary Our Mother, Undoer of Knots—and our new Altar and the blessing of our Monastery. This is truly a beautiful ceremony and a major event in our lives as monks. It will also require some expense as we need to give stipends to those who help with the ceremony in addition to providing cameras and other technical aids for the overflow crowd and purchasing new vestments and other requirements for the ceremony. If you would like to donate something specific in honor or in memory of a loved one, or if you would just like to help out with a donation, please contact the monastery.

And while we are begging, please remember that we still have Mary’s Building Blocks for the expansion and improvement of our monastery; now that we have a suitable house for the monks, we have to make much-needed changes to St. Joseph’s house. Especially important are insulation and stucco to cut down on the electric bill and make it energy-efficient like our new house. The land next door is also still for sale, and we are still hoping that somehow it will become possible for us to obtain that land since our property now is so very narrow.

As you know, during this hundredth anniversary of the apparitions at Fatima, we have been holding special days of recollection on the 13th of each month starting in May. These days have truly been a blessing. October 13th is the day we annually celebrate our titular feast of Mary Mother of the Good Shepherd, so this month we joined that feast with our commemoration of the hundredth anniversary of the miracle of the sun at Fatima and the Blessed Virgin’s final appearance to the three children. We celebrated solemn Mass at 4:30 p.m., followed by a rosary procession to our Fatima shrine, where we celebrated Vespers. Afterwards the group gathered in Saint Joseph’s House for refreshments and fellowship.

We are enclosing with this letter a copy of the image of the Divine Child Jesus, Mirror of our Merciful Father, with a powerful prayer we pray continually in our Monastery. Our prayer it will be a blessing to you in your union with the Lord.

May the Virgin Mary, the mother of us all, lead us in the upcoming season of Advent to her Divine Child, our healer, our Lord, and our Peace.

In the Hearts of Jesus and Mary,

I am,

Rev. Father Seamus of Jesus, O.S.A.Prim.