**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

ww:augustinianmonks.com

Tuesday, November 13, 2018
Feast of All the Saints of the Augustinian Order

Dear Family and Friends,

Praised be Jesus Christ!

Once again, as I begin this letter to you, I apologize for the mix-up concerning the mailing of our last newsletter. Thank you for being so kind and patient with us. You truly are our friends and family!

At the end of my last letter I said I would write more concerning the recent major crisis in our Church. It truly isn’t something we can run away from, or stick our heads in the sand to pretend it doesn’t touch all of us. As I mentioned, our own Monastery was established in 1989 on October 13, the anniversary of the miracle of the sun in Fatima in 1917. During those private revelations of the Mother of God to Lucia, Francisco and Jacinta, the three children of Fatima, the Blessed Mother warned about many very difficult times the clergy and the people of God would go through unless they prayed, fasted, and did penance for all the sins committed throughout the world. She promised her Immaculate Heart would triumph but told the children that we all had to take her warnings seriously and do our part of serious prayer, penance and reparation. Ever since our beloved Pope St. John Paul II consecrated the world, and especially Russia, to the Immaculate Heart on March 25, 1984, many powerful miracles have taken place including the fall of the Communist wall. Yet, my brothers and sisters, Satan, the devil himself, knows the victory of Christ, our victory, is near at hand, and so he is in a real rage to destroy peace, especially in the Lord’s own church. As Revelation 12.12 says, “So rejoice, you heavens, and you that dwell therein! But woe to you, earth and sea, for the devil has come down upon you! His fury knows no limits, for he knows his time is short.” We have the assurance from the Lord Jesus Himself that the gates of hell will never prevail against us, but that doesn’t mean we won’t observe, and even be a part of the battle we read about in Revelation 12. In verse 17 we read, “Enraged at her escape, the dragon went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep God’s commandments and give witness to Jesus.” The meaning of the word devil comes from to divide, and boy the old buzzard is sure living up to his name! We see clergy and lay faithful in many a struggle, and bishops against bishops, cardinals against cardinals, and even members of the hierarchy requesting the resignation of His Holiness Pope Francis.

The horrible priest scandal of 2002 that wounded and scarred our Church has come back in a fury and vengeance to once again bring so many to tears, anger, and total frustration and disgust. The clergy sexual misconduct is a terrible crime that too long overlooked.

Though the crime of pedophilia among Catholic clergy in 2002 according to the independent study was 4% or less, compared to other professions and religions, that was 4% too many. Thank God in 2018 it was listed at less than 1%, but again this should never be at all. The secular press much too often doesn’t make the distinction between pedophilia, a deeply psychological illness, and ephebophilia, sexual misconduct with post-pubescent teenagers, and other sexual acts with adult men and women. Don’t misunderstand me, all is grave sin, a word our society doesn’t like unless it refers to Catholic clergy in particular. When a person has sex out of the marital bond, our society doesn’t usually give a good fig about it. Yet sin is still sin, and grave sin is grave sin. Though we are all sinners, we must strive with all our hearts, and with God’s grace, to root out our own personal sins. To see blatant sin in our religious leaders only breaks down the gospel ideals we must strive for with all our hearts. I can only say, my dear brothers and sisters, that we here in our Monastery are deeply affected by all the news, and are totally ashamed of what has gone on and sadly at times still goes on.

Our Monastery was founded in 1989 with two charisms: to reclaim the joyful search for God in the brotherly monasticism that our father Augustine lived after his conversion and continued to live and love even after he became Bishop of Hippo, and secondly to offer our lives in prayer, intercession, penance and reparation for all our bishops and priests, and to serve these priests when any opportunity arose within our contemplative life. Though the scandals of our present time were hidden from us back then, we nonetheless knew and more and more grew in the knowledge that we were in a terrible battle with sin, darkness and the devil and his fallen angels. As we became more and more aware of Satan’s presence and activity among humans, his hatred for the Church, especially its priests, became very evident. I turn to all of you with all my heart and beg you to truly be our family and our friends, and join with us in this terrible battle.

It goes without saying that we all must be deeply attentive, concerned and compassionate to the victims of any sexual misconduct on behalf of the clergy or any Church related persons. This is an area where we can clearly see the powerful effect that sin has not only within the sinner but also upon those affected by the actions of the sinner. Our hearts should be broken over the wounds that our brothers and sisters have endured, in many cases for much too long a time. I humbly ask you to always remember them in your prayers, and daily sacrifices. By no means am I lessening what our concern should be for them, but I must magnify the particular call of the Holy Spirit to our Monastery and to those united with us, and that is the profound need of our priests and bishops for the mercy of God and for His healing and deliverance during this turbulent time in our Church’s history.

The sacred words of our Lord Jesus haunt me, “Judge not and you will not be judged, condemn not and you will not be condemned” (Matt 7:1). Perhaps these sayings from the Desert Fathers may shed a bit more light on our attitude.

Sayings of the Desert Fathers (4th-5th centuries)
Systematic Collection, ch. 9 (SC 387, p. 427f.)

"Woe also to you! You impose on people burdens hard to carry"

A brother who had sinned was dismissed from the church by the priest, and Abba Cessation rose and went out with him, saying: «I, too, am a sinner»...

      One of the brothers at Scete committed a sin. A council was held to which Abba Moses was called. But he refused to come. Then the priest sent someone to say to him: «Come; everyone is waiting for you». He stood up and came with a basket with a hole in it on his back which he filled with sand. And that is how he carried it. The others, coming out to meet him, said to him: «Father, what is this?» The old man said: «My sins are pouring out behind me and I do not see them, and am I coming today to judge the sins of another?» Hearing this they said nothing to that brother but forgave him.

      Abba Joseph questioned Abba Poemen, saying: «Tell me how to become a monk». The old man said: «If you want to find rest in this life and in the world to come, say on every occasion: 'As for me, who am I?’ And judge no one».

      A brother questioned this same Abba Poemen, saying: «If I see a sin in my brother, is it better to hide it?» The old man said: «The moment we hide our brother's sin, God hides ours too; and the moment we reveal the sins of our brother, God also reveals ours».

Visits
Recently we had a very interesting visit from Hayden Vaverek, the founder of Pax Bonum (http://paxbonum.org), an organization that provides a place for accused priests to find time to pray and seek a new direction for their lives. Shortly before that visit we had a telephone call from Brian Pusateri, founder of Broken Door Ministries (https://brokendoorministries.comhhhjhjh). Brian gives talks and retreats on the brokenness we all experience, whether because of abuse or simply our own human weakness.

Raffle news
On Sunday September 23rd, we had our drawing and I am happy to announce the winners. This time they are scattered around our country. The first-prize winner of the trip was Margaret Whitehead from Texas; the second-prize winner, of a $100 gas card, was Corey Kupec from Connecticut; the winner of the third prize, a $50 gas card was Sandee Bard from right here in DeLand, Florida.

New Raffle! First prize this time will be an appetizer tray by Harry and David consisting of Sicilian Jack cheese, Oregonzola blue cheese, mixed nuts (cashews, almonds, walnuts, pecans), Toscano salami, dried salami, black olive spread, olive oil and sea salt crackers, rosemary baguette crisps, and sea salt caramels, all worth about $100. The drawing will be on the 21st of December so that your package will arrive in time for your celebration of the New Year. Second prize is a $50 gas card, and third prize a $25 gas card. As usual, we are asking a donation of $3 per ticket or $5 for two tickets. Duplicate the enclosed sheet of tickets if you wish, and please remember to put your name and contact information on the ticket.

Locally our Associates have started another tradition, a monthly 50-50 raffle, and we thought we’d like to expand that to our more distant friends as well. We have already had our October drawing, and the winner was Martha O’Brien. The total jackpot was $370, split 50-50 between the O’Briens and the Monastery. The next drawings will be the 18th of November, the 16th of December, and the 20th of January. For these drawings we ask $5 for one ticket or $10 for three tickets. You can send us a check or use PayPal (see our web site for direct access to PayPal), but either way be sure to give us your name and contact information. Once we hear from you we will fill out your ticket for you and enter it into the drawing.

Other ways to help us
Besides the raffle, we want to remind you as the civil year draws to a close that we are a 501 (c) 3 non-profit corporation and welcome any donations you may be able to make to our Monastery.

And if you are doing any online Christmas shopping through Amazon, you can benefit us by going to <https://smile.amazon.com> and selecting us as your charity of choice. When you do this, you don’t spend any more, but Amazon donates a portion of their profits to us.

All Souls
We are already well into November, a month that is, as you know, a sacred time to remember and pray for our beloved deceased brothers and sisters. On November 2nd, the Commemoration of all the deceased, we especially prayed for all of your beloved dead and will continue to do so in all our Masses and prayers throughout the month. Please feel free to send us their names, and we will place them in front of the altar for the remainder of the month.

Mother of the Good Shepherd
October 13th is the day that each year we celebrate our Solemnity of Mary Mother of the Good Shepherd, the titular feast of our Monastery and the anniversary of our founding. All of you, your loved ones, living and deceased, and all your special intentions were in our hearts and remembered especially during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass on our feast.

First Anniversary
The Ninth of December marks the first anniversary of the consecration of our Oratory of Mary our Mother, Undoer of Knots. As we rejoice in the growth of our Monastery as reflected in this beautiful chapel, we also daily turn to Mary and ask her to undo the knots in our own lives. We hope that you too will find this a wonderful way to bring Mary into the situations in your lives that need her tender care.

Finding us on the Internet
Just imagine: The monks are on social media! Our YouTube (monksaugustinian@gmail.com), Facebook (monks@augustinianmonks.com), and Twitter (monksaugustinian@gmail.com) accounts are all functioning! On YouTube you can find several of the Sunday homilies. If you are interested, you can go to YouTube and then search Augustinian Monks. You can also communicate with us through Facebook or Twitter.

Coming soon
Thanks to the generosity of our friends, we are planning a new shrine on our Monastery grounds. This shrine, which we hope to build opposite the entrance to our Chapel, will represent the apparition of Mary our Mother to Bernadette in the grotto at Lourdes. Giovanni Pierinelli, of the Santa Teresita Statuary Company (<http://www.santateresita.org/>) has crafted a number of wonderful statues for us over the years and is one of our good friends and benefactors. He has offered to donate the statue of Bernadette, and we are very excited about this new opportunity to honor Mary and to provide a place of prayer for ourselves and our visitors.

May Mary the Mother of Jesus the Good Shepherd, and Mother of all our shepherds, pray for the healing and unity of her Son’s beloved Bride the Church, and may the holy seasons of Advent and Christmas bring you renewed faith and joy in our Lord and Brother Jesus Christ.

I am,

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