**Augustinian Monks of the Primitive Observance**

**Mother of the Good Shepherd Monastery**

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Feast of Our Mother of Good Counsel  
April 26, 2017

Dear Family and Friends,

Christ is risen, alleluia!

Long ago and far away, in junior year of High School, our religious teacher, Sister Mary Hillary, R.S.M., of blessed memory, taught that just as one can look at the rings around the trunk of a tree and count its years of life, so the hearts of believers will be etched with the Easter Vigils we have celebrated in our life time. As the years pass by I see the simple wisdom in such a statement, for the more we profess Christ’s victory over sin and death, the more we will realize that for us who love and serve the Lord life is never ended; it is certainly changed at death, but not ended.

In the six weeks leading up to Easter we are reminded that “unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies it remains alone, but if it dies it will bear much fruit.” (Jn12:26) These words from the holy Evangelist reminds us, not only of our Saviors own death, but of the true meaning of the holy season of Lent. We spent these six weeks in prayer, fasting and works of charity, to inwardly renew our hearts and minds for renewing our sacred vows of baptism in which we unite ourselves totally and forever with the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. As His followers and disciples we are to be conformed to Him, in a death likes His, in order that we may be transfigured into His glorious and risen life.

As I write to you this spring, the words I have just written have new and more powerful meaning to me personally, as well as to our Monastery. Death is certainly not a stranger to us, and we have felt deeply its sting in the beginning of this new year of 2017. On Saturday, February 4th, my brother Edward, my only sibling, died. Though he had endured a rough 6 months recuperating from back surgery and had suffered two strokes during that time, he was truly coming along and did not seem to be in danger of death. Sadly, he contracted *C. diff.,* and it was this infection that reached his heart and finally took his life. I was truly blessed to have Edward as my brother, and I feel deeply the loss of him in my life, but my trust is in the wonderful mercy and love of God. I humbly ask you to remember Edward James in your good prayers, along with Yvonne (Bonnie), his wife and best friend, my two nieces, Susanna Rose and Caryn Elizabeth, and Susanna’s husband Oscar. Please also pray for his step-daughter, Heather, her husband Rev. Bill Clease, and their 4 children, Avery, Nataly, Emma, and Allen, my brother’s grandchildren.

Along with the death of my brother, we lost two others who were close to us and to our Monastery. Regina (Jean) Grier died on January 19. I had known Jean for more than thirty years, since the time that she was nursing and took care of my ailing father. Jean was a remarkable woman, a mother of 7 and married more than 57 years to Jim. In her nursing and in her personal life, she showed so many of us the love and tenderness of God. She always reached out to us in some way on every holiday or personal anniversary. Your prayers for Jean and her family will deeply be appreciated. We also lost our friend Erleen Bailor. Erleen and her husband Bobbie have been coming to our Chapel for a few years. Erleen, who loved and taught dance, will truly be missed. Again I ask for your prayers for her and her family.

Even as we mourn, we remember that our beloved dead have not abandoned us. These words from the theologian Karl Rahner, S.J., express our firm belief:

The great and sad mistake of many people…  
is to imagine that those whom death has taken, leave us.   
They do not leave us. They remain!   
Where are they? In darkness? Oh, no!   
It is we who are in darkness.   
We do not see them, but they see us.   
Their eyes, radiant with glory, are fixed upon our eyes…  
Oh, infinite consolation!   
Though invisible to us, our dead are not absent…  
they are living near us, Transfigured…  
into light, into power, into love!

**Novenas and Prayers**

All of you were brought in our prayers before our beloved holy Father St. Joseph during our solemn annual novena. We place our Monastery, and especially our temporal needs into his loving hands. We also remembered your special intentions in our novena to Divine Mercy, beginning on Good Friday every year and leading up to Divine Mercy Sunday, which we just celebrated on the Second Sunday of Easter, April 23. This year we will celebrate our 29th annual solemn novena to St. Rita of Cascia. As you well know, she is known as the Saint of the Impossible, and we sure have proof of her powerful intercession. Once again we shall unite ourselves with you during St. Rita’s novena, May 14 to her feast on Monday May 22. Also on the 14th of May we will pray for all mothers, living and deceased, and on the 18th of June for all fathers, living and deceased. If you would like, you are invited to send us their names.

**Vocations**

We also ask for all your prayers for vocations to the monastic life and especially to our foundation. When I was preparing for this foundation, a wise monk told me never to be surprised at those who are at first attracted to our life and then leave but rather to be surprised by those who stay and live out their monastic vocations. We would like to have more of those surprising men who make a firm commitment to the consecrated life of the Augustinian Monks. Please pray for us!

**Raffle**

Our new raffle will have three prizes: the first will be 3 nights in Orlando, the second a $100.00 gift certificate for Bed, Bath and Beyond, and the third a $50.00 gas card. We have included a sheet of tickets, but you certainly may make more if you wish. It is extremely helpful to us if you cut the tickets yourself. 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 held on Trinity Sunday, the 11th of June.

**Visit**

On Friday February 17th we were honored with a visit from our Bishop, his Excellency John Noonan. Bishop Noonan was accompanied by Father Joseph Waters. They had visited our beautiful Oratory of Mary Undoer of Knots once before, but this was the first time they had arranged to visit with us. Our guests were most gracious, and we look forward to many more years here in the Diocese of Orlando. The bishop did notice that we don’t yet have a real guest house so that we can be more open to those who want to spend time in prayer away from their daily routine. Of course, that is one of our dreams for the property that is adjacent to our own and that we still hope to obtain. The bishop also noted that we have no place like an outdoor screened pavilion where we can invite groups of people to gather. I’m sure he wasn’t thinking of the cost when he mentioned the importance of such a structure, but we have since found out that a rough estimate would be $35,000-$40,000. Our building fund is still open to donations!

As we celebrate this year the 100th anniversary of the appearances of the Blessed Virgin Mary to the three children of Fatima, we plan to have six days of recollection here at the Monastery, on the 13th of each month from May through October so that all who are in our area may obtain special blessings during this year. After 9:00 a.m. Mass on these days, there will be opportunity for confessions or simply private prayer in the chapel or on the grounds. At 11:30 a.m. there will be Marian devotions, including the rosary, at our Fatima Shrine near the long driveway on our property. At the end of this time of recollection lunch will be available for $10.00 for those who have reserved ahead of time. Let us all join in asking our beloved Mother to intercede for us with her Son.

Hoping to get another newsletter out before the end of June, I remain in Easter joy

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