**Augustinian Monks of the Primitive Observance**

**Mother of the Good Shepherd Monastery**

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Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Dear Family and Friends,

Praised be Jesus Christ!

Today, on the universal calendar, we keep the memorial of St. Anthony of Padua. Anthony is one of the most popular saints in the life of the Church. Many of the faithful invoke his help when they have lost some precious article. He is often depicted holding the written word of God and with the Child Jesus, the Word of God, in his arms. Did you know that this wonderful saint in our Church’s patrimony was born in the year 1195, not in Italy, where he died in 1231, but in Lisbon, Portugal? At the early age of fifteen Fernando entered the Augustinian Canons and planned to live his religious life praising God in the Divine Office and contemplating the face of God. As with so many of us, God had another plan for him. He met members of the new religious community founded by Francis of Assisi as the friars were bringing back the bones of their brothers who had become the first martyrs of the new community. Fernando was so moved by their faith and zeal that he requested to transfer his vows from the Augustinians to the Franciscans and spent the last 10 years of his young life as a Franciscan friar. At the time of his transfer he decided to take on a new name, choosing as his patron the great St. Antony the Abbot, the father of all monasticism. We could speculate that he chose this wonderful Saint to remind him of his monastic roots and his deep love for the contemplative life. Anthony thought he too would become a martyr missionary, but again the Lord had other plans for him. In Italy he met St. Francis, who felt Anthony was deeply spiritual and therefore capable of being entrusted with teaching theology to the young friars. Though St. Anthony had joined an active religious community, he still loved and longed for the life of solitude and silence. At one point he even built a tree house to get away from all those demanding his precious time. Exhausted with preaching and teaching, he died on Friday, June 13, 1291, at the age of 36. Several monasteries of Poor Clare Nuns competed to provide his burial spot, but finally on Tuesday, June 17, his body was hastily put to rest and the debate ceased. Most scholars believe that this is the origin of the Tuesday devotion to St. Anthony.

This holy Doctor of the Church has played a part in our own Monastery’s history. When we were on Peaks Island, Maine, our monastery was a former retreat house named St. Joseph’s by the Sea. The sisters who owned it before us had previously had another retreat house called St. Anthony’s by the Sea, and when they moved to St. Joseph’s by the Sea they erected a very large stone statue of St. Anthony of Padua in the back of the property. The statue is now in our cloister garden along with a statue of the Blessed Mother. Saint Anthony has always been one of my personal patrons as well. During World War II my maternal uncles James and Robert Conniff served in the Marines. My mother vowed to St. Anthony if her brothers returned home safely and if she was ever blessed with children she would name one of her sons Anthony, and that is what the initial A. in my name stands for. I’ve always had a soft spot in my heart for St. Francis, and at one time, long ago and far away, before I knew God’s will for me to be an Augustinian monk, I used to have a confessor who was an Augustinian Friar, and I used to tease him, saying that St. Anthony was smart and left the Augustinians for the Franciscans! In more recent years I have been known to say that St. Anthony, who had a true Augustinian spirit and heart, was so charitable that he wished to bring such gifts to the poor little band of new friars. One thing I truly can state is that he is a wonderful friend and a very powerful intercessor. St. Anthony, pray for us.

Many of you have sent messages of condolence, masses and prayers in response to the death of my brother Edward. Some in the northeast were even able to attend his funeral in Pennsylvania, and I am deeply grateful to all of you for your prayerful kindness at this time of great sorrow and loss. May Edward rest in peace, and may blessings abound for each of you.

On the seventh of June, we lost another friend and Associate when Charles Hagelstein died of cancer. Charlie and his wife Lois were dear friends and supporters of our monastery, and we pray that the Holy Spirit will pour fourth comfort on Lois in her grief. May she be surrounded by loving friends, and may Charlie rest in eternal peace.

In raffle news we have two announcements. First, the drawing for the last raffle winners are: first winner, Christine Davenport, second winner, Barbara Musto and third winner, Mary Gerold. Second, we are having another raffle! The ever-popular prizes are the same as last time: first prize, 3 nights in Orlando; second, a $100.00 gift certificate for Bed, Bath and Beyond; third, a $50.00 gas card. We have included a sheet of tickets, which you are welcome to duplicate if you wish more. If you can, 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 held on Sunday, the 6th of August, the Feast of the Transfiguration of Our Lord.

We also ask you to remember us during the lean summer months and to keep Mary’s Building Blocks in mind as we continue to try to buy the land next door and complete our building projects. We are very grateful for every donation, big or small. We are a 501 c (3) non-profit corporation, so all your gifts are tax-deductible.

We have just recently, on the 4th of June, celebrated the Solemnity of Pentecost. We now pray and worship in Ordinary Time with the grace given to us by the Holy Spirit. This quote from one of the sermons of Saint Anthony of Padua, can give us both strength and encouragement.

“The Spirit of truth … will testify to me.”

The Holy Spirit is a ‘stream of fire’ (Dn 7,10), a divine fire. As fire acts on iron so does this divine fire act on hearts that are soiled, cold and hard. When it comes into contact with this fire, the soul gradually loses its blackness, coldness, hardness. It is transformed entirely into the likeness of the fire with which it is enflamed. Since, if the Spirit is given to a man, if he is inspired by it, then it is so that he might be transformed into its likeness so far as possible. Beneath the action of this divine fire a man is purified, warmed and melted. He attains the love of God, as the apostle Paul says: ‘The love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.’ (Rom 5,5)

Since a number of those who help with the newsletters will be away during the summer, we probably won’t be sending out another letter until late September. We pray these summer months are filled with many graces and blessings for you and yours.

Your Augustinian Brother,

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