

Dear Associates and Friends,  
The Lord be with you!

Abbot Joseph of Our Lady of Divine Grace came from Vietnam to visit his monks here. Our unpredictable weather gave him the welcome of cool rainy days. He brought news that Poor Clare nuns in California have given the use of a vacant monastery as a residence for his student monks. Our Fr. Peter will keep house there, preparing for the arrival of some full-time monks, who will staff the residence.

Br. Joseph Tan Duy Ngo received his Religious Worker (R-1) visa, so he will make the journey from Vietnam soon to join our community. When a boy, he went to Australia as a refugee. He spent a number of years there and gained Australian citizenship. Then he returned to Vietnam and entered the monastery there.

Br. John of the Cross has been studying English at St. John Seminary XXIII in Boston. Stephen Garza, a classmate, had worked in forestry in Oregon for twenty years. During the summer they traveled here, and he gave us some conferences about choosing goals and policy for our own woods, beginning with an inventory of our forest.

Fr. Basil returned for six weeks to Vietnam to share in the observance of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Cistercian Order there. He also was able to spend time with his invalid and aged mother. Family bonds and tradition are strong in their country. The youngest son is responsible to provide and care for aged parents.

The Vietnamese Order of Mary Mother of the Redeemer held their annual Marian Days gathering at Carthage. Each year an increased number of Vietnamese people come to share in the Masses, public processions, prayers and good companionship. Our Brothers Ambrose and Alphonse attended a week there before the feast of Our Lady's Assumption into Heaven.

The garden did well this year; plenty of leafy greens, cantaloupes, green beans and sweet potatoes. Br. Gabriel has come to terms with the endless chiggers. The inventory of fruit cakes is building up in our cool warehouse, as we come closer to the year-end holiday season. We earn our bread and butter by making fruit cakes.



The Second Vatican Council called for a renewal of the Liturgy. In the process, St. Monica's feast was moved from May 4<sup>th</sup> to August 27<sup>th</sup>, the day before St. Augustine's feast. Now the mother and son are together in the Liturgy, as they were in life.

When St. Augustine was dying, his city of Hippo was surrounded and under siege by the barbarian tribe of Vandals. Augustine asked that Psalm 50, King David's prayer of repentance, be written on the wall of his room. He was sharing willingly and deeply in the shadow side of Christ's Paschal Mystery.

After Augustine's death, the Vandal's siege against Hippo was broken, the city was saved, so the glory side of Christ's Paschal Mystery was beginning to be revealed for St. Augustine.

Augustine had reached an important and respected position in the Church, as Bishop of Hippo in North Africa, defending the true Faith against heresies and developing the teachings of Christ in the Gospels. He was very pastoral. His door was open all day, though he never allowed himself to be alone in his room with a woman. He worked at night on his great output of Christian writings.

Augustine wanted to stand in the light of truth before his people, so he composed his autobiography which he named *Confessions*. He told of his long search as a young man for meaning, for truth, for direction in life. He lived with a woman and had a son outside of marriage, whom he named Adeodatus—*A Gift from God*. He also told that, as a younger man he had betrayed a companion into sexual sin. During all those years his mother Monica had kept praying. As he was coming closer to conversion, Augustine would pray, "Lord, make me chaste, but not yet."

Confession means telling one's sins, but confession also means telling the work of God's grace and mercy. The moment of grace came for Augustine when he heard and chose to obey St. Paul's word to the Romans, "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh with its desires."

**St. Augustine's lifelong struggle with his passions led him to identify Original Sin as concupiscence. One-thousand years later the Augustinian monk Martin Luther taught that human nature is essentially corrupted by Original Sin, and the grace of Christ is only put over the corruption like a cloak. However, the Council of Trent clarified that Original Sin in our first parents had two elements: A deliberate guilty choice to disobey, and a loss of sanctifying grace/supernatural union with God. Original Sin in the children of our first parents has two elements: We are born without sanctifying grace/supernatural union with God, and a woundedness—darkened mind, weakened will, and off-balance emotions. The grace of Christ is the gift of the Indwelling Holy Spirit, Who restores our human nature to the full image and likeness of God, so that our human nature not only remains essentially good, but is also made holy. The Spirit of Christ also helps us in our lifelong struggle with woundedness.**

**St. Augustine is a good patron saint for us and for the Church now in this time of scandal and purification and sanctification. St. Monica and St. Augustine, pray for us!**

**In the Sacred Heart,**

**Your Ava Monks**

