

Dear Associates and Friends,

The Lord be with you.

The sun is shining brightly. This time mighty Casey did not strike out. The Cubs won the World Series with a classical comeback and a grand finale overtime game. It took over a hundred years, but those who persevere to the end ...a lesson for monks.

Then came the national election. It was such a challenge to discern which presidential candidate represented the lesson of two necessary evils. A voter could write in Abraham Lincoln, but that would not cast a vote against the worst evil. Whichever candidate won meant that one serious problem was down, but another serious challenge was up.

To gain a more informed vote for our enclosed monks we consulted several outside persons. Their viewpoints give contrast and thought to our own views. Bishop Leibrecht's bottom line was to research, pray, vote according to your conscience. So the lot fell on Donald Trump. Now we are all called to continue praying all the more.

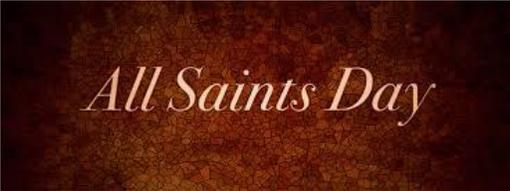
The fruit cake orders started coming on strong in September, and then slowed down in October. We will see what effect the election results might have on peoples' interest and taste for Thanksgiving and Christmas fruit cakes.

This year the Autumn colors of our trees were quite subdued, but Indian summer made up for the lack by extending on and on. When the first real frost was predicted in the second week of November, Fr. Thaddeus and helpers hastened to dig the last of their bountiful sweet potatoes and bring in the many remaining pumpkin and squash.

We found a long list of September birthdays in our growing Community: Br. Alphonse, 28 on the 11th; Fr. Leon, 88 on the 15th; Br. Gabriel, 29 on the 22nd; Br. Ambrose, 33 on the 27th; and Fr. Cyprian, 86 on then 28th.

Donna Hobart drove down from St. Louis to take a blood sample from our monks, the Nazareth hermits and the Franciscan friars. The H & H Health Associates return a complete blood-work report to each of us. This yearly service has been a very valuable donation and assist to our Community health and well being.

Fr. Peter has published a book [THE PARADISE MAN according to Thomas Merton](#). Fr. Peter first came to the United States as a Dominican Friar refugee during the Vietnam War. He wrote his thesis for a Master's Degree in Theology at the Theological Union in Berkeley, CA. The subject of his thesis was a study of the theme of Paradise in Thomas Merton's writings. Fr. Peter's book is based on his thesis. After his priestly ordination Fr. Peter served as a member of parishes and campus ministries. Later he returned to Vietnam. There he felt called to a more contemplative form of life. He entered the Cistercian Abbey of Our Lady of Divine Grace there. Most recently he was sent here to Assumption Abbey as one of the first founding group of their monks. This is another step forward in the renewal of relationship between the two branches of our Cistercian Family.



All Saints Day

God created us for *Union with God*. St. Augustine prays to God, "Our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee."

There is a deep instinct in human nature to reach out to God by offering sacrifice.

St. Francis of Assisi realized so clearly that all is gift. Everything that we are, and everything that we have comes to us from God's hands. In His love God pours blessings on His creatures. As creatures we respond by offering gifts back to our Creator in return. This is sacrifice—receiving gifts from our Creator and offering gifts in return to God.

God has revealed that in His inner divine life our Creator is a family. God in His eternal NOW is always fathering His divine Son, giving Him the fullness of the one Godhead. The Father and the Son express their mutual divine love by giving the fullness of the one Godhead to their Holy Spirit. God is love—God is divine family love.

The Lord God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in His overflowing love freely chooses to create human beings in a family context of father, mother and children, which is a limited imperfect image and likeness of God's divine family. As creatures we are essentially incomplete. We long for fullness and completion. Other creatures can give us only partial fulfillment. That is what St. Augustine means by our hearts being restless until they rest in *union with God*.

There is an infinite gap between creature and Creator—between ourselves and the living God. This distance is made worse by the mystery and reality of human evil and sin, which is a great obstacle interfering with and destroying *union with God*.

Our heavenly Father chose to bridge the gap between creature and Creator by sending His divine Son to become a true human being. Our Lord Jesus told Nathaniel that the Son of Man is a ladder reaching between heaven and earth, with the angels of God ascending and descending upon that ladder. He comes as the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. He receives the command from His Father to lay down His life as a ransom for the many.

At the Last Supper in His priestly prayer Jesus asked the Father to sanctify His disciples in truth. He said that He sanctified Himself in order that they might be sanctified. The word *sanctify* means to make holy. Our Lord the eternal High Priest sacrificed Himself as the Lamb of God, offering infinite atonement for all the sins of human beings. The word *sacrifice* also means to make holy. His sacrifice removes that obstacle to union with God. He then pours forth His gift of the Holy Spirit into the hearts of believers, giving them a real adopted share in God's own divine family life. This is the fulfillment of God's plan and of our yearning for union with God. He makes us children of God, as St. John says.

Holy Mother Church celebrates the feast of All Saints on November 1st—the whole communion of saints: the victorious saints in heaven, the suffering saints in purgatory, and the militant struggling saints on earth. The book of Revelation gives a panorama in heaven of salvation. Chapter 4 is a liturgy of creation. Chapter 5 is a liturgy of redemption, which unfolds all through the book into the last two chapters which are a liturgy of communion. These three parts (creation, redemption, and communion) reflect the three elements embodied in the celebration on earth of our Lord's Holy Sacrifice of the Eucharist. The liturgy of the Word reveals God's plan of creation for us, then the liturgy of the bread and wine renews and makes present Christ's redemption for us, and finally the liturgy of Holy Communion nourishes the divine life within us, as we receive the Body and Blood of Christ, our spiritual food and drink.

Our Lord does this in order that the world might know that He loves the Father and that the Father has sent Him, and that the Father loves us adopted children with the same love with which he loves Him.

In the Sacred Heart,

Your Ava Monks



