

SAINT AUGUSTINE'S HOUSE

NEWSLETTER

Advent A.D. 2017/18

✠ PAX

The two men sat in the living room on a quiet evening, one watching television, the other reading a book, one a teenager, 16ish, the other in his fifties. They enjoyed each other's company and were as comfortable without conversation as with. The younger broke the silence with a question. "Pops, does time seem to be going faster to you?" The older burst into laughter. "Just wait," he said, "that's only beginning for you. It accelerates as you go ahead. By the time you reach my age it's racing."

What is time? Time is the way we measure the distance from the beginning to the ending – of anything. We calibrate the measurements with natural cycles, so that a day is the time it takes for the earth to complete one full revolution on its axis. A month is roughly the time from one new moon to another. A year is the time it takes for the earth to complete a full circuit of the sun. We divide the day into twenty-four hours and each hour into sixty minutes and each minute into sixty seconds and each second into milliseconds. Scientists of various disciplines carry the precise divisions much further, often with startling discoveries and insights.

We live in time much as fish live in water. Our counting begins at conception, has regular way markings (birthdays, anniversaries, etc.) and goes from beginning to end. Our perception of time varies greatly, according to age, engagement and deliberate pace (you can pretty much determine how busy you want to be). The movement of linear time is constant, though many of our aphorisms with regard to time make it seem to drag or run or race. A poem long lost in memory describes each phase of life, ending each phase with a line about time, "time crawled, . . . time toddled . . . time walked . . . time strolled . . . time ran . . . time raced . . . time slowed . . . time gone." In fact *we* drag or run or race, while time is steady. Much of what becomes of one's life has to do with management or use of time. Many never get the coordination of priorities and time, spending disproportionate amounts of time in activities which have little to do with the avowed priorities of his/her life (watching endless television, endless pursuit of drugs, etc.). Far too many are "floaters" in time, surface surfers with



little direction and less interest in deeper explorations. Far too many come to the end and only then realize the extent of wasted, now irretrievable time.

The point of this article, however, is not simply another lament about poor stewardship of time. The Greek language, in which the New Testament was written, provides us with another dimension of time, another way to think about it. The simple and direct word for time is *chronos*, the kind of linear time described above, from which we get the English word chronological. But the Greek also uses the word *kairos*, a more technical word for time, meaning the right time, the fullness of time, the critical moment. Ah, that's right. There are some things which have to happen at the right moment. Sometimes it is a general appropriateness which is required, while with other matters the requirement is quite precise.

Sometimes the event or action in question is of paramount importance, sometimes cosmic, while at other times it has to do with one person or with one small group. The season of Advent is one of the former. Through generations and centuries the people of Israel and their neighbors vacillated between faithfulness to God and apostasy, between incessant internecine warfare and peace on all fronts, between ways of life and ways of death. It is a tawdry history in which the Lord seeks his people and calls them to right relationship and good living. Jeremiah 6:16-17 tells the story very succinctly: "We will not walk in it. . . . We will not give heed." And the drama proceeds back and forth *ad nauseum*.

But there comes a time when all the stars are aligned and the circumstances are right. It is the *kairos*, the critical moment. The prophet Isaiah cries out, "O that you would tear open the heavens and come down . . . Yet, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. Do not be exceedingly angry, O Lord, and do not remember our iniquity forever. Now consider, we are all your people." (64:1,8,9) The dual seasons of Advent and Christmass are an exploration of the greatest convergence of all the factors and circumstances in history, the moment when God

did, in fact, open the heavens and come down, becoming part of our story in a very tangible way. The openness and invitation of God are relentless, seeking the *kairos* in history and the *kairos* in my life. The convergence of favorable factors, you see, is multi-dimensional, working in macro and in micro and everything in between. It has to do with the center point of our history in the Christ event, but it also works its way down to the particulars of a single life. Many of those who witnessed the events of God's entry into this fleshly world were quite unaware of their greater significance, while others perceived something quite unusual. It is also true in individual lives; it is quite possible to miss the *kairos*, the golden opportunity and only realize it much later. (A friend reported a cartoon in which a character lamented, "Why is it opportunity knocks but once, while temptation beats down my door every day?")

Let your living of Advent and Christmass attend to both dimensions of the coming and the birth. Make time for the telling of the story from Matthew and Luke. Make time for the sharing of the story in sermon and song and eucharist in your own community of faith. May Christ be born in Bethlehem, in your congregation, in your home and in your heart. The time is right.

Waiting and watching with you,
—Fr. John Cochran

News & Notes

❖ The highlight of the autumn weeks was, of course, Fellowship Day on Saturday, October 14. Everything went as planned. Fr. Frank Senn provided an outstanding sermon at the opening Mass (copies of which are available on request) and Pastor James Wetzstein of Valparaiso University tackled his subject, "Bridging the Generation Gap," very competently, with concrete ideas and sugges-

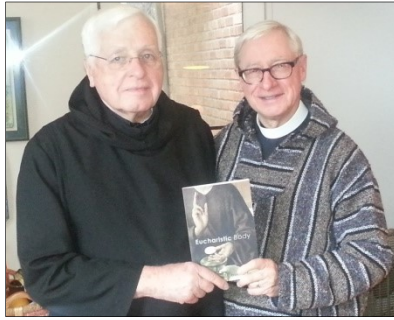


tions. The rich fare of the morning was followed by the rich fare of a Pig Roast, though a downpour of rain hampered afternoon attendance.

❖ Br. Richard again attended the General Retreat of the Society of the Holy Trinity at Mundelein, IL, September 26 to 28. He was accompanied on the journey by Pr. Fred Keller and Bishop Aubrey Bougher, both associate members.

❖ The number of visiting groups has been increasing through the year. A sampling of the fall weeks includes: a small group of pastors from Northwestern Pennsylvania (3 this year) who come annually, September 11 to 16; a group of first-time retreatants from First Presbyterian Church in Ann Arbor, MI, September 22 to 23; students from Trinity School of Ministry in Ambridge, PA, October 16 to 20; Esther Circle from Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church, Bloomfield Hills, MI, October 26; Meta Peace Team, headquarters in Lansing, MI, participants nationwide, intensive training in non-violent conflict resolution for deployment into Israel in January, November 9 to 13; A class of 7th and 8th graders from Bloomfield Christian Academy studying Medieval History spent a (school) day at the monastery on November 20, including Mass, prayers, talk, tour, hikes on the trails, 16 students, 4 parents and 2 teachers.

❖ This fall long-time associate member Frank McSherry took up residence here as a “resident associate.” Thus we come to winter with seven of us living here, the three professed, Fr. John, Br.



Richard, Fr. Jude, together with four confreres, Jack Duffy, Kevin Harris, Frank McSherry, and Brett Torgler (not pictured). We continue to be blessed by several regular visitors, each on his/her own day of the week, each with his/her own purpose, all praying with us and sharing with us. *Deo gratias.*

❖ Connor Simpson and Tom Horton from Washington state, USA, and from the United Kingdom respectively spent time teaching English in Vietnam, met there and in 2017 undertook a cross country trip from Spokane, WA, to the East Coast and back again. They purchased a 1993 van, outfitted it and contacted friends along the way, including St. Augustine’s House, planning to stay here two or three days in September. At the mention of our need to make a video about the House Connor whipped out his phone and began interviewing and videoing. Within two days he had made a well edited short introductory video which was published on YouTube on November 28, 2017. Check it out at St. Augustine’s House – An Introduction. Brief, but not disappointing. Kudos, Connor.

❖ We are in the process of changing our e-mail address. The new address is:

office@staugustineshouse.org

For a time we will check both addresses, but please update your records now and begin using the new address immediately. Speaking of electronic communica-



At right: The Monastic community and other December residents

tion we also want to express our gratitude to Daniel Susan and to Jared Magill for maintaining our global presence on the internet via our web site and on Facebook.

www.StAugustinesHouse.org

Find us on Facebook

The Congregation of the Servants of Christ, St. Augustine's House, is an ecumenical Christian community whose life of discipleship is inspired and shaped by the Holy Rule of St. Benedict. We identify with the Lutheran tradition, understood as a movement within and for the one holy catholic and apostolic Church of Jesus Christ.

We are committed to the growth of the permanent resident community, to the pursuit of ecumenical understanding, and to the provision of retreats for members of the Fellowship of St. Augustine and others. We seek to serve the whole Church by our life of prayer and by the use of our facilities.

New Building

The beginning of November we were relieved to get an occupancy permit for use of our new building, Brugger Hall and the residential wing extending to the east. The permit for now is temporary awaiting the final inspection of the elevator, which we expect before the end of the year.

Since that time the building has received generous use even as we complete the furnishing of the bedrooms and of the "great room" which serves well as a gathering space or for quiet reading in front of the fireplace. For now only the upper five of the ten bedrooms are completed. The lower level of the building, however, only lacks the installation of carpeting to be completed. With the heavy expenditures of the last two years, we are holding off of this project for the time being.

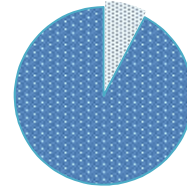
You are invited to consider becoming a **Mortgage Partner** with us. The monthly mortgage payment is \$3,074. You may participate for any amount from \$100 and up for any month of your choice. The invitation to become mortgage partners for a month has received a good response as indicated below.

October: \$1,000 by Pr. Thomas, T. Kochenderfer; \$500 by Paul Schroeder (in memory of Gordon Vogt); \$100 by Thomas B. Chittick.

November: \$1,000 by Pr. Frederick G. Keller, and by Francis M. McSherry; \$200 by Bernadette Ethridge, and by Fr. Thomas A. Smith.

December: \$1,000 by Carl D. Ekstrom; \$500 by Fr. Philip H. Pfatteicher; \$200 by David Hiles; \$100 by Pr. L. George Detweiler, by Howard Burk, and by Carolyn Jarmin.

We are grateful to our benefactors for this palpable assistance with one of our major expenses.



■ Paid: \$22,682

■ Owed: \$273,287

Holy Day Liturgies

Dec. 24th 4th Sunday of Advent, 10 a.m.

Dec. 24th Christmas Eve, 7 p.m.

Dec. 25th Christmas Day, 10 a.m.



Gifts are gratefully acknowledged in memory of

DONNA BARR
ROBERT W. JENSON
STEPHEN L. KURTH
JOAN W. MILLER
GORDON VOGT

and in honor of

WILBERT ADAM BOERSTLER
the ministry of JOHN R. COCHRAN
KENNETH GREBLE
ROBIN & JONATHAN MONTGOMERY