

AUGUSTINIAN

Province of Saint Thomas of Villanova





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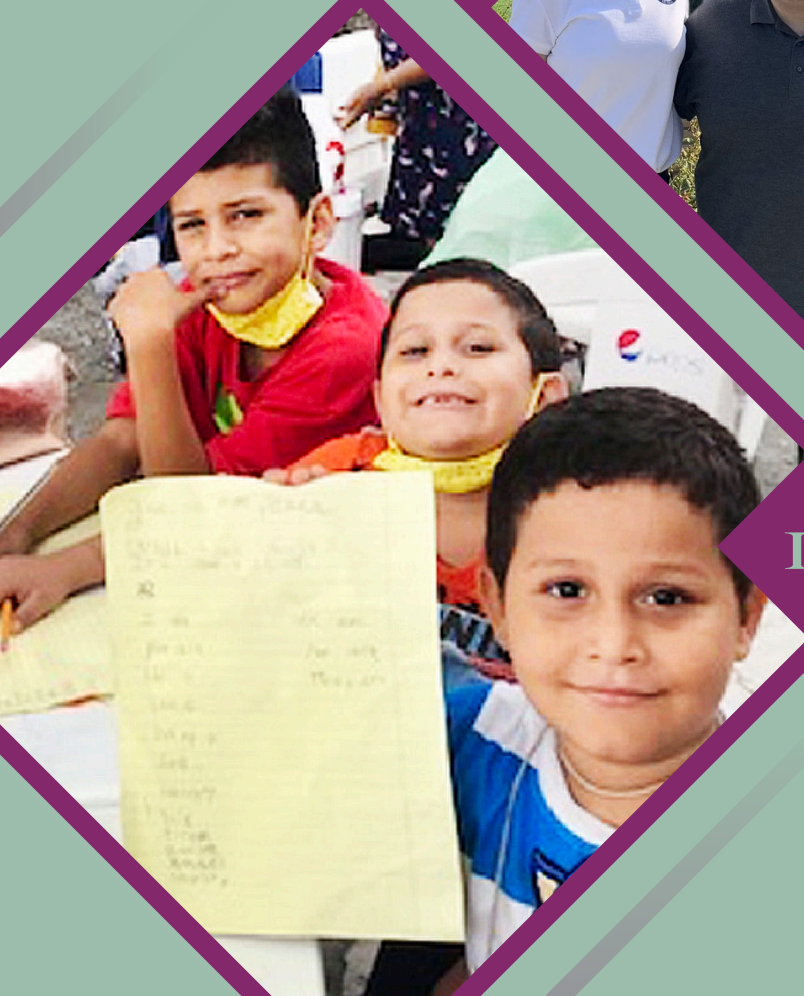


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Cover

Moments following the ordination of June 26, 2021 (l-r): Augustinian Frs. William Gabriel, Michael Di Gregorio (Prior Provincial), Jeremy Hiers, and Elizandro Contreras



*The Inauguration of the
Fr. George F. Riley, O.S.A. Fund
for Augustinian HealthCare*

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Visit: AugustinianFund.org/father-riley

PROCEEDS TO BENEFIT THE FR. GEORGE F. RILEY, O.S.A. FUND FOR AUGUSTINIAN HEALTHCARE

*Publication of the Province of
St. Thomas of Villanova*

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Dear Friends.

In many ways, the arrival of September suggests a new beginning: Schools reopen; programs and events of many kinds resume; a change of season draws near. New beginnings offer new opportunities, new resolutions, and, undoubtedly, new challenges.

You will notice in the pages that follow indications of several new beginnings for us. Happily, each one brings a hope-filled promise of good things ahead. Some of these have to do with friars who have transitioned to new ministries and assignments over the summer months; others to new decisions taken in vocational journeys or advances made in a significant cause.

At the same time, there are areas of province life and ministry – just as there are in our own lives and work – that continue on steadily, anchoring us in enduring values and truths that allow the new to happen without throwing us off balance. One offers us security and comfort; the other promotes freedom and growth. Both are important for each of us, and for the province as well.

As a new cycle of activity and engagement begins, we friars wish you many blessings, renewed vitality and vision, grace and peace. We have weathered the challenges of many months of limitation, infirmity and loss and have been changed by these. And though they are not completely behind us even now – and never will be totally – let us approach today and tomorrow with confidence and that hopeful spirit that is a mark of our Christian belief.

As this edition of *Augustinian* goes to press, I want to offer a word of recognition and deep thanks to Cher Rago for her editorship of this magazine in her role as Communications Director for the province over the past several years. Cher was instrumental in reimagining this publication and initiating other means of communication for us. We are grateful and wish her well in whatever the future may bring.

In St. Augustine,

Father Michael

Fr. Michael





October 1918

A Memorable Month

BY FATHER MICHAEL DI GREGORIO, O.S.A., PRIOR PROVINCIAL

As we have made our way, carefully and prudently, toward the early fall season, happily free of many limitations which the pandemic made necessary for so long, we cannot forget the significant changes we have experienced these many months. Among them is the absence of countless individuals who fell victims to the virus, including relatives, friends, and associates of ours, whom we now keep in our hearts and in our prayer.

“It is not in our power to determine how our death may come about. However, it does lie in our power to determine how we are to live, so that we may die without fear.”

— St. Augustine, Sermon 306, 2

In the many stories written about our experience of COVID-19, we have frequently been reminded of another historic pandemic of a century ago, that of the 1918 influenza which afflicted society for two full years. Approximately 500 million people, a third of the world's population at the time, were infected, and at least 50 million of them fatally so.

This historic loss touched the Province of St. Thomas of Villanova as we read in the obituaries of five of our friars, most of them very early on their journey in Augustinian life. These five died within days of each other in October 1918, three of them young student-friars and two, priest-friars engaged in parish ministry.

The first to succumb was Brother Gilbert Klunk, a 24-year-old novice from McSherrystown, PA, at the very beginning of his time with us. As the finality of his illness became evident, he was invited to make his profession of vows, as was permitted to novices in danger of death. The end came for him on Thursday, October 10, 1918. Surviving were his parents and six of his 10 siblings.

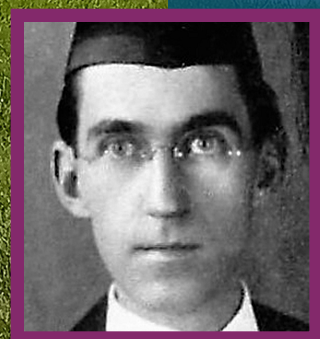
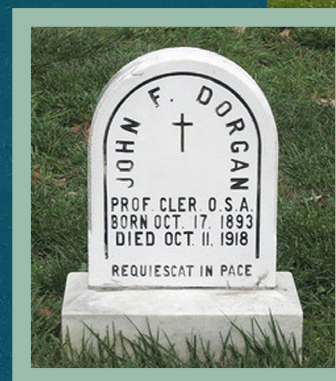
The following day, October 11, it was the turn of Br. John Dorgan, of Lawrence, MA, just a year older than Gilbert. He had professed his vows in 1917 and was pursuing studies

at Villanova. Because the college was under quarantine at the time, the record shows that Br. John's funeral was held without music or chant, with no sermon and without the customary praying of the Office of the Dead. We might assume that this was the case for the funerals of the other two students as well.

The third of the students to fall victim to the pandemic was Br. Albert Starr, of Colorado, a 30-year-old deacon who was completing the final months of preparation prior to his ordination to the priesthood. Br. Albert had become a convert to the faith while a student at Villanova. He entered the community two years later and was professed in 1913. He died on October 15.

These three young religious lie in adjoining graves in the community cemetery just steps from the church on Villanova's campus.

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Br. Albert Starr, O.S.A.

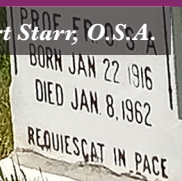
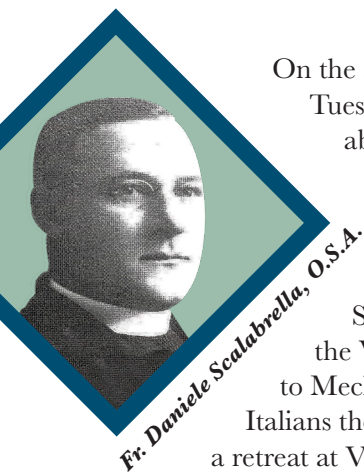


Photo by: Rich Slinkard



On the same day that Br. Albert succumbed, Tuesday, October 15, Fr. Daniele Scalabrella died in Troy, NY. He was 41 years of age. Father Daniele was an Italian friar who had come to the United States to minister as a member of the Italian Mission in South Philadelphia. He later joined the Villanova Province and was assigned to Mechanicville, NY, to minister to the Italians there. Shortly after returning from a retreat at Villanova, he was taken ill and died in St. Mary's Hospital. He is buried in St. Augustine Cemetery, Troy, NY.

The last of the friars to be fatally infected was Fr. Daniel Fogarty. He and his brother, Thomas, had entered the Order together in 1907 and were ordained together in

Rome in 1913. Fr. Dan spent most of his brief life as a priest in parish ministry and died while assigned to St. Augustine Church in Andover, MA on October 18, 1918, at 31 years of age. He was buried in St. Mary Cemetery, Lawrence, MA.

These five friars, like so many other victims of the pandemic of 1918, died in their prime.

We might wonder where life's journey might have taken them had they been spared infirmity. Though this may be a fruitless question to pose, remembering them and giving thanks for their lives profits us still these many years later. ✠

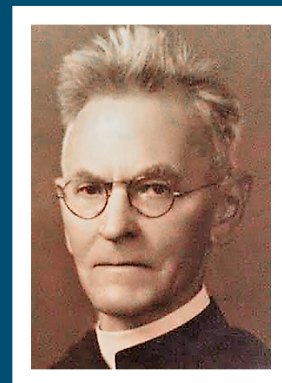


Fr. Daniel Fogarty, O.S.A.

Augustinian Records the 1918 Pandemic for World History

Fr. Francis Tourscher, O.S.A., was an important commentator on the Catholic Church's response in Philadelphia to the 1918 pandemic. He published in 1919 a three-part account of the work of religious sisters in caring for the victims of influenza compiled from those sisters' personal experiences.

The report was published in the Records of the American Catholic Historical Society. In part, he wrote: *"On October 10 (1918) eight Sisters were detailed for relief work at Villanova College, where eight trained nurses were overworked attending to the sick in the Seminary (St. Mary's Hall) and Tolentine Academy, for boys under sixteen. ... In St. Mary's Hall there were fifty-three cases of influenza out of sixty-nine students and three priests resident in the building. Three students died – Albert Starr, a deacon; John Dorgan, Professed; and Gilbert Klunk, Novice. All together seventy-five cases were treated in St. Mary's Hall. ..."*



Fr. Francis Tourscher, O.S.A.

✻ [Learn About Fr. Francis](#)



A diet kitchen was established in St. Mary's Hall and the Sisters turned their attention and energy to every phase of 'emergency' work – cooking, washing (in bathtubs – there was no laundry in the building), cleaning rooms and corridors, and relieving the nurses in the care of the sick night and day. There were eighteen beds in the community room; classrooms were filled, and cots set up in the reception halls and four cots in the vestibule." ✠



[Read Full 1919 Report from Fr. Francis](#)

Augustinian Journey

An App on Our Way to God

Following St. Augustine's lead, we have established this virtual community to reflect on a spirituality that calls us together to know and love God, each other, and the world we share. Join us on this journey!

App Highlights

PRAY

Augustine for Today: Daily inspiration from St. Augustine for 365 days of the year.

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MUSIC: "He who sings," said St. Augustine, "prays twice." Hear Fr. Joe Genito, O.S.A., perform his inspirational classics.

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*Jewel Haines,
a longtime
patron of
the National
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Around the Province



Fr. Joseph Mostardi, O.S.A., has been appointed pastor of Our Mother of Good Counsel Parish, Bryn Mawr, PA, after completing four years of service to the Federation of Augustinians of North America in the role of Director of Formation at St. Augustine Friary, Chicago. Fr. Joe comes to Bryn Mawr with previous experience as pastor of St. Augustine Parish, Philadelphia, and Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish, Staten Island. Additionally, he has served the province as Vocation Director, Director of Pre-Novitiate Formation for both the Villanova and Chicago Provinces, in Campus Ministry at Villanova, and as parochial vicar.

Fr. Liam O'Doherty, O.S.A., has stepped down as pastor of Our Mother of Good Counsel Parish, Bryn Mawr, PA, to become a member of the Augustinian community in Waterford, NY and parochial vicar at both St. Mary's Parish, Waterford, and St. Augustine Parish, Troy, NY. Father Liam had been pastor in Bryn Mawr since 2016. Previously, he had been the last Augustinian pastor of Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish, Staten Island. Among other assignments, Fr. Liam served a number of years in parishes of the province in Japan.





Fr. John Dello Russo, O.S.A., has recently been assigned to the community of St. Augustine, Andover, as parochial vicar, while also assisting in Hispanic ministry in area parishes. Until recently, Fr. John had been a member of nearby St. Ambrose Community while ministering at Merrimack College. This summer he spent a number of weeks in Laredo, TX, assisting immigrants at the border. Most of Fr. John's life as a friar has been engaged in Hispanic ministry in New York as pastor of both St. Nicholas of Tolentine and Our Lady of Good Counsel Parishes, and in Lawrence, MA.

Fr. Allan Fitzgerald, O.S.A., has been assigned as prior of Bellesini Friary, Ardmore. He comes to this assignment from his former residence of St. Thomas of Villanova Friary, Rosemont, PA. Fr. Allan has long been affiliated with Villanova University, where he continues to minister as well as at St. Monica Parish, Berwyn, PA. Bellesini Friary is the community which offers hospitality to discerners to our way of life as candidates and pre-novices.



Fr. Frank Doyle, O.S.A., formerly prior of Bellesini Friary, is now a member of the St. Thomas of Villanova Monastery Community, Villanova PA. Fr. Frank, a counselor of the province, has given many years of his life to formation ministry as well as to parochial ministry in New York, North Carolina, and the greater Philadelphia area. He was also assigned to the province's mission in South Africa for a number of years. ✠

Remembering Father Bill Atkinson, O.S.A.

The early fall months of 2021 will mark two special moments in the cause of Fr. Bill Atkinson, O.S.A.



On Wednesday, September 15, we observe the 15th anniversary of Fr. Bill's death, which occurred at St. Thomas of Villanova Monastery, Villanova, PA. in 2006. Fr. Bill was 60 years old when his earthly pilgrimage came to an end. He had been a member of the monastery community's health care wing for just two years. Most of his life as a friar before 2004 had been spent at Monsignor Bonner High School, where his ministry had been principally directed toward hundreds upon hundreds of high school boys whom he taught, coached, and mentored – but most of all, and quite unselfconsciously, inspired. Students of Fr. Bill during those 30 years are among those who have advocated for the opening of the cause now underway to declare him a saint of the Church.

The first phase of the cause's process will draw to a conclusion a little more than a month after that September date in the second special moment mentioned above, when Archbishop Nelson Perez will visit the Villanova Church to formally close the process opened by Archbishop Charles Chaput in 2017 to investigate the life and holiness of Fr. Bill. On Tuesday, October 19, friars, former students and colleagues, family and friends will gather to celebrate a Mass of Thanksgiving and witness the rites that formally seal the findings of the historical commission and tribunal of the archdiocese, which have gathered records of Fr. Bill's life and ministry and the testimonies of those who knew him. This documentation will then be sent to Rome, where the next phase of the process will begin.



Watch and Share extraORDINARY

THE BILL ATKINSON STORY

Hospitalized and near death, tragedy gave way to an incredible journey for the first quadriplegic priest in the history of the Catholic Church.

Watch Video: Augustinian.org/extraordinary



Over the course of these several years while the process has been underway, efforts at bringing an awareness of Fr. Bill's story to more and more people throughout the country and beyond have borne fruit in the creation of the Fr. Bill Atkinson Guild, the production of the film, "ExtraOrdinary," viewed nationally on Public TV stations from coast to coast, and scores of parish and school presentations by friars, family members, and former caregivers of Fr. Bill. While the official work of examining his life and influence continues to be carried out by Church authorities, the important effort to extend awareness of Fr. Bill and his cause, as well as to promote devotion to him, is not lacking. Additional information, biographical material, and prayer cards are available at Augustinian.org/atkinson-guild and through the Augustinian Provincial Office at 610.527.3330. ☩



*Archbishop Charles Chaput
officially opening the cause
for Fr. Bill in 2017*

The Order and the Church Rejoice!

📺 Watch Ordination Mass

“Friars who are priests have as their first duty the proclamation of the word of God to others, in a manner that is adapted to their audiences; they are to offer the Eucharist, sanctify others with the sacraments, promote liturgical activity, establish and strengthen the people of God in unity and charity, and lead them to the Father.”

— Constitutions of the Order of St. Augustine, 155



Fr. Jeremy Hiers. O.S.A.

Saturday, June 26, 2021, saw the gathering of several hundred friars, family, and friends at the Church of St. Thomas of Villanova on the Villanova University Campus to celebrate with three of our brothers their call to presbyteral ordination. Through the laying on of hands and the invocation of the Holy Spirit, Brs. Elizandro Contreras, Jeremy Hiers, and William Gabriel became priests for the service of God and his people, as members of the Province of St. Thomas of Villanova. While untold numbers viewed the ceremony via livestream, those personally present raised their voices repeatedly in joyful song and eager prayer accompanied by repeated applause and affirmation as Augustinian Bishop Daniel Turley ordained these friars.

The two-hour ceremony, following an ancient tradition of the Church, drew to the newly ordained scores and scores of brother priests to impose hands, while invoking God's Spirit in a rich symbol of the unity of the presbyterate. Bishop Turley, recently retired Ordinary of the Diocese of Chulucanas, Peru, spoke with personal warmth and sincerity to the three friars just before the rites of ordination were administered, encouraging them in the following of Christ and imitation of Christ's own service.

Fr. Elizandro Contreras, O.S.A., is a native of the Dominican Republic who entered the formation program of the province in 2014. He made his



Fr. Elizandro Contreras, O.S.A.

first profession of vows in 2016 and his solemn profession in 2020. He recently completed his studies at the Catholic Theological Union, Chicago, and is now stationed at Blessed Stephen Bellesini Friary, Ardmore, PA. He will be one of the three friars to initiate our ministry at Cristo Rey High School, Philadelphia.

Fr. Jeremy Hiers, O.S.A., was born and raised in Cincinnati, OH. A convert to the Catholic Faith, he was employed for 11 years with the U.S. Army in Virginia before entering

the pre-novitiate program of the province in 2015. He made his first profession of vows in 2017 and his solemn profession in 2020. Fr. Jeremy served his pastoral year at St. Thomas of Villanova Parish, Villanova, then returned to Chicago to complete his studies. He was ordained to the diaconate in January 2021 and shortly after was assigned to Our Lady of Good Counsel Friary, South Philadelphia, where he continues to minister at St. Rita Shrine.

Fr. William Gabriel, O.S.A., hails from Dover, NH. He matriculated at Villanova University, graduating in 2013. He then taught for two years at Archmere Academy, DE, while discerning his vocation. He entered the formation program with Fr. Jeremy in 2015 and with him professed vows and was ordained to the diaconate. For his pastoral experience, he was assigned to Malvern Preparatory School, Malvern, PA, and for his diaconate he was assigned to St. Thomas of Villanova Parish, Villanova, where he continues to minister as parochial vicar. ✠



Fr. William Gabriel, O.S.A.

Anti-Racism

As Social and Personal Work

BY LACIE MICHAELSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

AUGUSTINIAN DEFENDERS OF THE RIGHTS OF THE POOR



Fear *of the* Other



▶ Watch Webinar Discussion on Racism

Justice and Peace Webinar Series online at [Augustinian.org/justice-peace-webinars](https://www.augustinian.org/justice-peace-webinars)

Illustration by: Markus Spiske

Often, talk of racism and injustice does not feel good. For some of us, warmth creeps into our cheeks, we become uncomfortable, we react as though cornered and afraid. Yet, talking about issues like racism is necessary. "The effort to engage us in these questions that touch upon justice and peace have been very helpful... it's something that we need to continue to do... we make some mistakes along the way. I think that we need to admit them, move on, try to correct them if we can."

The final webinar in the series was a conversation surrounding racism following the friars' reading and community discussions on the USCCB Bishops' pastoral letter, *Open Wide Our Hearts*. Some of the younger friars and men in formation spoke about their own experiences and reactions to reading the letter, and then the entire community was invited to share comments and ask questions. It was here that, collectively, the community agreed that more must be done. There needs to be some sort of audit of each part of our Augustinian community at large, and it needs to take into consideration our past present, and future. Br. Bob Thornton, O.S.A., explained, "This is both social and personal work... I'd love to see, as a dimension of our next chapter, if we can commit ourselves to specific and concrete behavioral ways of changing systems of injustice."

Now, as a lay collaborator working with the Augustinians, I ask of my fellow lay men and women – what are we doing about a lack of diversity in our vocations, ministries, and educational institutions? Have we examined these personal, societal, and institutional ways that racism infects and destroys these spaces? Let us see this time and greater societal call for anti-racist work as a personal call for each of us. Great strides have been made at Villanova University to dive deeper into the history of the college and discover the imprint of racism and its perpetuation in the university culture today. St. Thomas of Villanova Parish has an Anti-Racism Committee encouraging education, activism, and discussion among its members. As alumni and parishioners of such institutions, we must ask ourselves, "What is my role in this work?" One of my favorite quotes from St. Augustine encourages us to "Believe what you see, see what you believe and become what you are: the Body of Christ." Together, we are Church and we are community. Let us live up to the greatness of what that truly means.

Prior Provincial Fr. Michael DiGregorio, O.S.A., ended our most recent Justice and Peace webinar with a declaration of humility and a promise to keep working. These first two webinar series were meant to bring friars and lay community members together to discuss these difficult issues through the lens of the Augustinian way of life, in the spirit of community, and in an effort to engage one another in dialogue.

Racism does not "feel good," but talking about it, exploring our own faults, asking questions of the *status quo*, and demanding change are part of our greater call as Christians. I am proud to have volunteered with, been educated by, and now work for the Augustinian Order, and I'm excited to wade into these muddy waters together. I am heartened by Fr. Michael's closing statement, "If we do nothing, we're just going to stay as we are... I think that we always have to be on that road to make progress, and progress is going to cost something. So, I say for us as a Province, we don't have a choice. This is what we have to do in order to really be true to who we are." ✠

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website: [RightsOfThePoor.org](https://www.RightsOfThePoor.org)

The Journey to Augustinian Life

Since we write often about candidates to our way of life, as well as members making their way through the various stages of incorporation into our community, we thought it might be informative to explain some of the stages involved in this process. We begin with the novitiate.



Good Counsel Novitiate

For individuals seeking to become Augustinians, the process of familiarization with our way of life and incorporation into our community is known as formation, or more accurately, initial formation.

Initial formation consists of several distinct but related stages, the centerpiece of which is the novitiate experience – a yearlong introduction into the spirituality, values, and culture that characterize Augustinian life. Since the focus of

this particular stage is meant to acquaint novices with the essential elements of what it means to be an Augustinian, the year is an intense experience of life and learning. Regarding the latter, material shared with novices in classes, discussions, and conversations provides an exploration of our Order's history and traditions, charism, and spirit.

Novitiate is also an experience of life shared together in Christian community under the guidance of St. Augustine's *Rule*, that short but key document that puts forth his insights and values regarding religious community living. One of our friars once said that a person becomes an Augustinian in order to live the Christian life well, and so attentiveness to human and Christian growth through personal study, manual work, and spiritual direction are particularly important tools during this period of formation. Certainly, prayer and reflection, as well as significant times



(l-r) Kevin Gaugenbaugh, Nicholas Stone; Fr. Carlos Medina, O.S.A., Novice Master; Joseph Barowski; Rajen Gomes

“The novitiate is a privileged moment of formation in Augustinian religious life. Its basic purpose is to make known and to live out the essential requirements of this life through a personal discovery of Christ, our interior Master. This should be accomplished in such a manner that, through true conversion, the following of Christ, in keeping with Augustine’s experience and that of our tradition, becomes in fact the ultimate norm of our religious life.”

– [Plan of Augustinian Formation, n. 101]

of quiet and adequate space are necessary for all of these things to be achieved under the direction of friars who are appointed to accompany novices during this process.

While novitiate, then, refers to one of the stages in the formation process, the same term is also used to designate the place where this phase of formation occurs. Presently, the novitiate for all Augustinian novices in the United States is located in Radnor Township, just a few miles from Villanova, PA. The spacious home, gifted to the Villanova Province by Mr. and Mrs. Jim Colleran, is well suited to a novitiate experience, capable of accommodating up to seven novices and a formation staff of three friars.

This current year, there are five novices who were received on August 14, 2021. They are Kevin Gaugenbaugh, Nicholas Stone, and Joseph Barowski for the Villanova Province, Rajen Gomes – for the Chicago Province, and Mark O’Brien for the Irish Province.

The team of formators is Fr. Richard O’Leary, O.S.A., prior; Fr. Carlos Medina, O.S.A., novice director; and Fr. Aldo Potencio, O.S.A., community treasurer and assistant director. ☩



✱ [Learn More About Vocations](#)

Friars at the Border

During the summer months this year, two friars of our province ministered to asylum-seeking refugees at the border in Laredo, TX. Frs. John Dello Russo, O.S.A., and Arthur Purcaro, O.S.A., volunteered to assist migrants entering the U.S. from Mexico, one under the auspices of Catholic Charities and the other in association with a ministry organized by a Baptist Church. What follows is a compilation of their individual experiences.



Bridge before US immigration

The southern border of the United States has been the subject of divisive debate for several years. Immigrants, in particular from Mexico and Central America, are fleeing the violence, corruption, and poverty of their homelands and are seeking to cross into the United States.

The main story is that of people, families, youth, and sometimes children who have chosen, or have been forced, to flee the violence in their homelands seeking safety, security, and a chance to make a better life.

The ministry of Iglesia Buen Samaritano is really the ministry of Pastor Lorenzo Ortiz, his family, and several volunteers who coordinate the various facets of the ministry. The church has established four “albergues” (shelters) in Mexico – three in Nuevo Laredo and one in Monterrey.

The largest shelter housed approximately 250 people, primarily women and children. People who had prepared or who were in the process of preparing their initial case

for asylum with a volunteer lawyer came to the shelter where they lived while awaiting an appointment at immigration. The living conditions were basic: shelter and food. The shelter was secure, but people were encouraged not to go into the surrounding neighborhood. Adults often had responsibilities for laundry, cooking, and cleanup. Although there were occasional activities for children, they generally “played” in the limited open space. Rice and beans – and maybe once a week some meat – was the typical menu.

Typically, five or six busloads of refugees would arrive each day, transported from the border by ICE, tested for COVID. Those who tested negative arrived in La Frontera without really knowing where they were. Many had been traveling rough for anywhere from one week to two years to get to where they arrived. ... Most were under 25 years of age, many with young children, all saddened by having to leave their town and family for one significant reason or another (death threats, severe health issues, insurmountable debts, among others). They all risked their lives, many being kidnapped and ransomed along the way, and worse, thinking they might never see their family or neighbors again.



Albergue shelter in Laredo

Upon arriving, each family would be registered (most speaking Spanish, although we had refugees from Portuguese-speaking Brazil, Creole-speaking Haiti, French-speaking from parts of Africa, and one Manchurian speaker from China).

Once registered, they needed food and drink, a change of clothes (which they picked out of generously donated items – including footwear as well as every possible piece of clothing imaginable, since almost all arrived having had everything they had been able to bring with them removed as they crossed the Rio Grande).

Not many of the immigrants shared the story of their decision to leave their homeland. There were incidents of violence that made making a living impossible. Parents feared for their children

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Kids in shelter

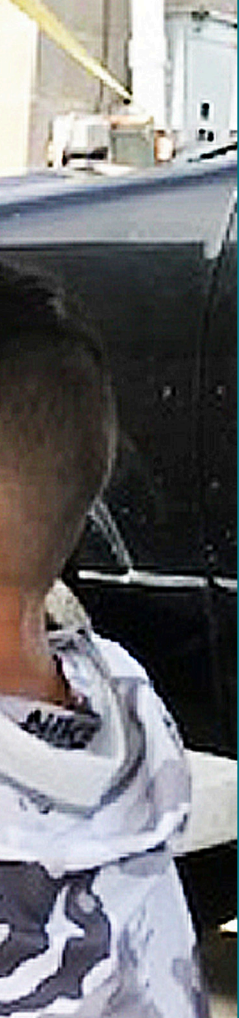
who might be recruited for gangs or drug trafficking. One mother shared that her children had to stay at the church for their safety. Several mentioned that they were kidnapped by the cartels and held for ransom. Some immigrants left family, even other children, behind with relatives because the family that was paying for them to cross could not pay for all the children.

We worked from early in the morning till late in the evening, then went to our rooms exhausted but at peace that we had the unbelievable opportunity to welcome, greet, refresh, and share a few moments with Christ who had come seeking refuge in so many guises and forms that day. Each day was a treasure, patience being tried, incomprehension compounded, but knowing we were gifted with this moment in our lives, sharing from the abundance we ourselves have benefitted from. ✠

Grandsons of Immigrants

Both Fr. John and Fr. Art reflected on the personal experience of being grandsons of immigrants themselves and how this fact helped them to appreciate the plight of the people to whom they had ministered at the border. "All four of my own grandparents were immigrants, having arrived in the U.S. under somewhat similar circumstances to the people I greeted in Laredo. Once here, they met their spouse, formed their family, suffered the effects of prejudice, and contributed to their church, their neighborhood, employer, and society in general. ... What a privilege to have the opportunity to show the welcoming face of God to exhausted, anxious, hope-filled families seeking refuge and a better future!"

"The faces of today's immigrants may be different from the faces of immigrants of the past but their stories are very similar to the stories of our ancestors and, as we are reminded constantly, we are all children of God."



“

*The present condition
of the human race is symbolized by that
man described in Scripture who was robbed by
bandits and left lying half-dead in a ditch. He was
ignored by the passing crowd until a passing
Samaritan stopped and took care of him.
His rescuer was a Samaritan, a foreigner far
removed from him in nationality who became a
neighbor by showing mercy. Our Lord Jesus wants
us to understand that the Good Samaritan
in the story represents himself.*

”

— St. Augustine (Sermon 171, 2)



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Top row: Carolyn Dreyer, Basil Pattammady, Sheena Cadua

Second row: Allison Hayes, Ryan Henderson, Robert Gipson

Bottom row: Emmanuel Diaz, Isabel Prado, Madilyn Jones

Taking the Long View: Lessons Learned during Unprecedented Times

BY JOANNA BOWEN, DIRECTOR OF AUGUSTINIAN VOLUNTEERS

The last 17 months of our lives have been anything but ordinary. When I became Director of the Augustinian Volunteers, I could have never imagined that my tenure would overlap with a once-in-a-lifetime global pandemic. During this time, like many others, I've been devastated at the loss of life. And as life slowly reverts back to something that resembles pre-pandemic normalcy, I've paused to reflect on the four lessons I've learned through my work with the Augustinian Volunteers during this strange time.

During this time, I've found that we are all much more resilient than we imagine. The AV staff, comprised of Hannah Kunberger, Maggie Morrin, and myself, is no different. There was no blueprint for how to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Together, we put our heads together and created a plan. We showed up every day to our living rooms and kitchen tables ready to work. I'll be honest - there were times when I didn't know what we would

be able to pull off successfully. So much was out of control. But together, we persevered.

I also learned about innovation this year. The Augustinian Volunteers is a program steeped in tradition. While, over the years, many updates have been made, there are still aspects that have remained unchanged. The uniqueness of this year meant that we had to re-examine how we executed retreats, communication with volunteers, and other programming. In normal times, it's easy to push innovation off to the side, especially when there are immediate tasks to complete, but innovation had to be at the forefront of our work during the pandemic.

This year, as a world, we learned how much we need each other. The Augustinian Volunteers have always known how important community is. And while we were proud of a very successful year, there is no substitution for opportunities to gather and share in person. It was invaluable as well to

be able to connect with other programs similar to the Augustinian Volunteers to compare notes and debrief.

Finally, I learned to recognize the importance of rest. For the first time since becoming Director, I was not traveling. An AV staff member's typical travel schedule involves ping-ponging between service cities and long days and nights on retreats. While there are certainly benefits to the traveling to be with volunteers in person at their sites, a brief respite

allowed for restoration for both staff and volunteers.

I can only hope that the lessons learned during this time are ones that I continue to reflect on as we look to shape the future of the Augustinian Volunteers. If we fail to integrate what we've learned during the pandemic, we are wasting the strange opportunity that came about from tragedy. We are certainly eager to resume working with the volunteers in person, and we will do so even more effectively than before. ✠

A Heart of Service

An Augustinian Volunteer's Blog

When I joined the Augustinian Volunteers, I was really unsure what a "year of service" would look like. I was hoping to feel like everything I was doing throughout the whole year was in service, to really be there for the students, and help the school in any way I could. But during the first weeks and months of my time at Villanova Prep, I felt as if I were just at a normal job and honestly, I was let down. With classes being online, I had little to no interaction with the students and didn't feel as if I was contributing much to the larger school community. I started to wonder, "Am I even helping anyone?"

During the second month of my AV year, Villanova put on a virtual Freshman Retreat. We had worked on this for weeks: planning, prepping, and trying to work out all the details and technical issues. When the day finally arrived, I felt confident that the retreat would go really well. But, of course, it went horribly. There were so many hiccups: issues on Zoom, distracted students, internet problems. I felt horrible, like none of the students got anything out of the retreat and that I had failed as a volunteer.

One of my co-workers said to me, "It doesn't matter if you reached all of the kids or only one of them. You never know how this experience might impact them later in life." I thought, "She is right." This isn't about me feeling like I had connected and gotten through to every single student at Villanova - it's about me humbly serving this community and God, offering my work up to Him so that he can bring fruit from it.

As the year has continued, I have tried to shift my mindset of service, to look at all things that I do as a form of service. From doing the chores in our community to staying after mass to help disinfect, and even just being there to listen to someone who needs it. I have tried to adopt a "heart of service," to do my daily tasks out of love for those in my life, not needing to see the fruits of my labor, only needing to offer my work to God and know that nothing that is given to the Father is ever wasted.

Allison Hayes
Ventura, CA 2020-2021

✠ **Read Additional Volunteer Blogs**

Photo: (l-r) Allison Hayes, Emmanuel Diaz, Basil Pattammady





Photos by: Fr. Dan McLaughlin, O.S.A.

Jonathan Jerome, Shrine Director, speaks with a group of 450 pilgrims from California while they visit the National Shrine of St. Rita of Cascia

We are a Pilgrim People

BY JONATHAN JEROME, DIRECTOR OF THE
NATIONAL SHRINE OF ST. RITA OF CASCIA

In 2017, Pope Francis issued an apostolic letter titled, "Sanctuarium in Ecclesia." In this short document, the Holy Father draws a connection between the pastoral work of Shrines and the Church's promotion of the New Evangelization. He reminds us that "[the Shrine] is characterized as a genuine place of evangelization, where from the first proclamation up to the celebration of the sacred mysteries, the powerful action with which God's mercy works in people's lives is made manifest." The mission of the National Shrine of St. Rita of Cascia and the ministries we offer are inspired by the faithful, merciful life of St. Rita, and we aspire to be this kind of place every day.

In a society that seems to pride itself on how quickly it can evolve, respond, and adapt, the steady, sacred rhythm of life at a Shrine can feel out of touch and even obsolete for a lot of people. Even more disconnected is the ancient practice of making a pilgrimage to these places of devotion and prayer. For many today, the immediate benefits and instant reassurance of visiting a Shrine or spending time in silence is missing, and so naturally, its value in the world is seemingly lost.

But we know this is a false narrative. We know that "despite the crisis of faith that engulfs the contemporary world, [Shrines] are still perceived as sacred spaces to which pilgrims go to find a moment of rest, silence, and contemplation in today's often hectic life." In fact, earlier this summer, during the third week of July, the National Shrine of St. Rita of Cascia welcomed over 1,300 pilgrims from California, Illinois, Colorado, and New Jersey to experience the many graces of making a pilgrimage. Pilgrims from Nigeria, Brazil, the Philippines, Australia, and countless other countries make annual visits to the

Shrine. These diverse groups of pilgrims – young and old, rich and poor, healthy and sick – come to the Shrine in pursuit of a deeper relationship with God. The pilgrims recognize that a life oriented toward God and the journey that gets them there is not outdated or obsolete. It is a gift meant to be cherished!

And, ultimately, this is the type of gift that keeps on giving because a spiritual journey is not stagnant; it brings about ongoing conversion. During an apostolic journey to Santiago de Compostela and Barcelona in 2010, Pope Benedict XVI characterized pilgrimages in a similar way: "To go on pilgrimage really means to step out of ourselves in order to encounter God where he has revealed himself, where his grace has shone with particular splendor and produced rich fruits of conversion and holiness among those who believe."



From the Bronx to South Philly

Discovering the pilgrim spirit means partnering with like-minded apostolates who recognize the value of pilgrimages. Modern Catholic Pilgrim (MCP), a nonprofit organization dedicated to “walked pilgrimages” in the United States, through a grant from the St. Augustine Foundation, will host an Augustinian-inspired pilgrimage in the spring or early summer of 2022. The goal is to have friars and a small number of lay young adult Catholics walk from the Augustinian parish of St. Nicholas of Tolentine in the Bronx to the National Shrine of St. Rita of Cascia in Philadelphia.

Augustinian PILGRIM WALK

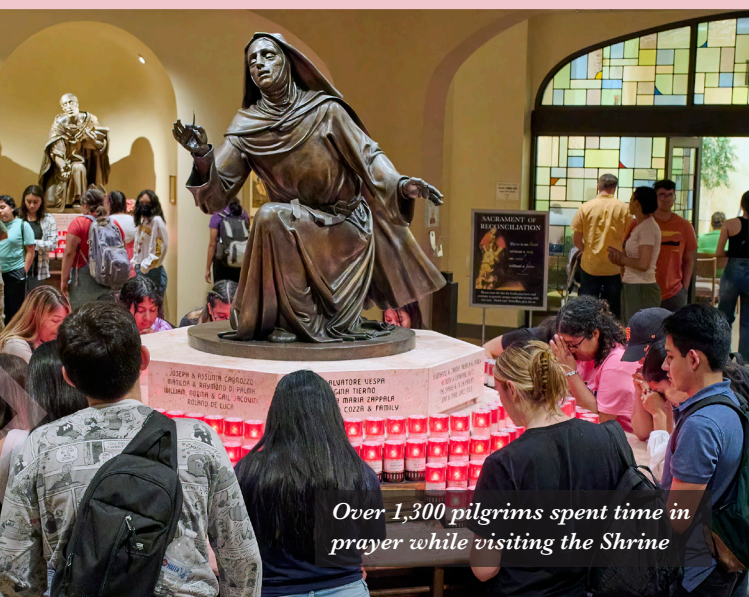


In collaboration with the Augustinian Province of St. Thomas of Villanova, the aim is that the pilgrimage be a way to evangelize, highlight, and support the wonderful work the friars have done – and continue to do – in parishes, schools, and various other ministries throughout the northeastern part of the United States. It will also be a way to build community among the friars and engage with young adults who are drawn to the Augustinian charism. And, of course, this kind of pilgrimage will serve as inspiration for others to come to the National Shrine of St. Rita of Cascia as pilgrims in the future. Are you interested? Let us know.

Email: will@moderncatholicpilgrim.com

At the National Shrine of St. Rita of Cascia, we are constantly praying for guidance as we explore “best practices” to encourage and rediscover this type of pilgrim spirit. One small way we try to do this is by offering an intentional ministry of hospitality. Led by Fr. Jeremy Hiers, O.S.A., we are creating new ways to

evangelize among first-time visitors and pilgrims. How do we make them feel welcomed, supported, and encouraged when they visit South Philadelphia? Similarly, we are constantly evaluating the ministries we offer and how we can expand them to include more people. Which voices are not being heard, or who is not being seen, and how can we ensure that they know “in the Shrine, the doors are wide open” to and for them? In the end, the Shrine aims to be a place that offers quality prayer and sacrament, but also other types of opportunities that help all people grow in service of the Lord and one another. We can do this by celebrating our Catholic faith with patrons and pilgrims, but also with those who find themselves at a distance or on the margins. ✠



Augustinian Province of St. Thomas of Villanova

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AUGUSTINIAN WISDOM

Inner Balance *and* Harmony

"Our aim as Christians is to become one with Christ, to hold Christ in us while we become like him. Christ is health. Health does not mean that we are going to be covered with bandages or with ointments: It means that our body will recover its inner balance and harmony. Only then, when we are perfectly balanced inside, can we become like Jesus. We can do many things unsuccessfully. For instance, we can fast, we can keep silent for a long time, as in meditation. We can take part in every choir song and prayer. We can wear a hair shirt. We can walk on snow and ice with bare feet. We can beg our food and dress in rags. Yet if in the meantime we are burning with sinful passions inside, if the old man is still alive in us, if wrath and pride, selfishness and cupidity are very much in evidence, if hatred, envy, vainglory, ambition are still in control, no matter how many gestures we make that seem virtuous, the fact is that we have not reached the health and the salvation that we call Jesus."

– Luis de Leon, O.S.A., *The Names of Christ*

Contemplation


BY FATHER MICHAEL DI GREGORIO, O.S.A., PRIOR PROVINCIAL

How contemporary Fray Luis sounds as he speaks of achieving balance and harmony in life and presents these as signs of good health! And yet how provocative in that he proposes union with Christ as the means and – no less – as the goal. We 21st century seekers are urged repeatedly on all sides to make the pursuit of a healthy life one of our principal aims and activities. Diet, exercise, mental stability, self-care, good interpersonal relationships are all factors in this endeavor, but so too is attentiveness to our spiritual side, suggesting other essentials for our consideration as well, such as solitude, silence, and a contemplative stance, to name just a few.

Does it occur to us, as Fray Luis suggests, that our life in Christ is designed to keep us healthy and whole, if not always physically, certainly in terms of our personhood? So many passages of Scripture present Jesus as healer and physician. *“We were sick,”* St. Augustine said, *“and could not move. And so, the physician came to the patient; the way was prepared for the wanderers. Let us be saved by him; let us walk through him”* (Sermon 1 Jn. 10,1).

Recall, for example, the episode in the 13th Chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke where Jesus encounters a woman who for 18 years had been incapable of standing erect. He called her to him, breaking through any barriers which her infirmity might have caused her, especially isolation or separation from others, and welcomed her. He laid his hand on her in a gesture of acceptance and blessing and said, “you are free.” And with that she was able to stand up straight.

Might we understand that the call to growth in the Christian life is a repeated invitation to stand up straight and be truly free? Fray Luis reminds us pointedly that we do this through attentiveness to our interior life, the access to which are silence and solitude. Within, we can come to recognize how encumbered we often are and can hear the divine physician’s prescription that can help us stand erect and set us free. Might we hear much of what Jesus has to say to us in the Gospels in this light? Is going the extra mile an invitation to healthy living, for example? Can giving a cup of cold water help us achieve balance? Will those ready to offer forgiveness or compassion find greater harmony within themselves?

A portrait of Fray Luis de Leon, a Spanish Augustinian, professor at the University of Salamanca, writer and poet. He is depicted from the chest up, wearing a dark habit with a white collar. The portrait is set within a purple diamond-shaped frame.

Luis de Leon [1527-1591] was a Spanish Augustinian, professor at the University of Salamanca, writer and poet, who is acclaimed as one of the masters of the Spanish language and of Spanish literature. He was an independent thinker whose spirit and openness during the period of the Inquisition made him suspect in certain quarters. For translating the Old Testament Song of Songs from medieval Latin to modern Spanish without previous Church approval, he was denounced in 1571 and was imprisoned for five years while awaiting trial. He was eventually acquitted and cleared of all charges of heresy and returned to his classroom on January 29, 1577, opening his class with the statement, “as we were saying yesterday...” Outstanding among his various writings was his masterpiece which has the English title, *The Names of Christ*. Fray Luis edited the writings of his contemporary, St. Teresa of Avila, at the express wish of King Philip II, and wrote a commentary on her work. He was elected prior provincial of the Augustinian Province of Castille at the age of 62 but died nine days later on August 23, 1591.

Join the Movement

BY MADONNA SUTTER
DIRECTOR OF ADVANCEMENT



Madonna Sutter
Director of Advancement

Dear Friends of the Augustinians,

I've had the opportunity to visit with Fr. George Riley, O.S.A., several times since the monastery reopened following the long COVID-19-related lockdown. Each time he greets me with a smile and says something that makes me laugh. In all the years that I've known him, he has always struck me as a very kind and loving soul. And as I listen to "Fr. Riley stories" from people who call or email me, I come to realize that this kind and loving soul has impacted the lives of countless people.

Whether you met Fr. Riley on a plane, in an airport, at a print shop, at Villanova, or the Jersey Shore – wherever he was – he

made it his business to strike up a conversation and begin a friendship that would last a lifetime.

Fr. Riley approaches his 86th birthday in November and together, the Province and Villanova University plan to honor his life as an Augustinian Friar and his service to the University.

Proceeds from the October 23rd event to inaugurate the **Fr. George F. Riley, O.S.A. Fund for Augustinian HealthCare** provide for the care of friars like Fr. Riley and his Augustinian brothers.

I invite you to share your Fr. Riley story with me – and a photo if you have one.

Madonna Sutter
Director of Advancement
email: madonna.sutter@augustinian.org
phone: 267.272.3048

*There are many ways in which
to participate in the
Fr. Riley event – sponsorships,
in-person or virtual tickets,
program book ads,
or donations.*

**ONLINE DONATIONS CAN BE MADE AT:
AugustinianFund.org/father-riley**

*Checks payable to the Augustinian Fund can
be mailed to 214 Ashwood Road, Villanova, PA
19085. Please note that your gift is earmarked
for Fr. Riley's Fund.*

For stock transfer instructions, contact Madonna Sutter.

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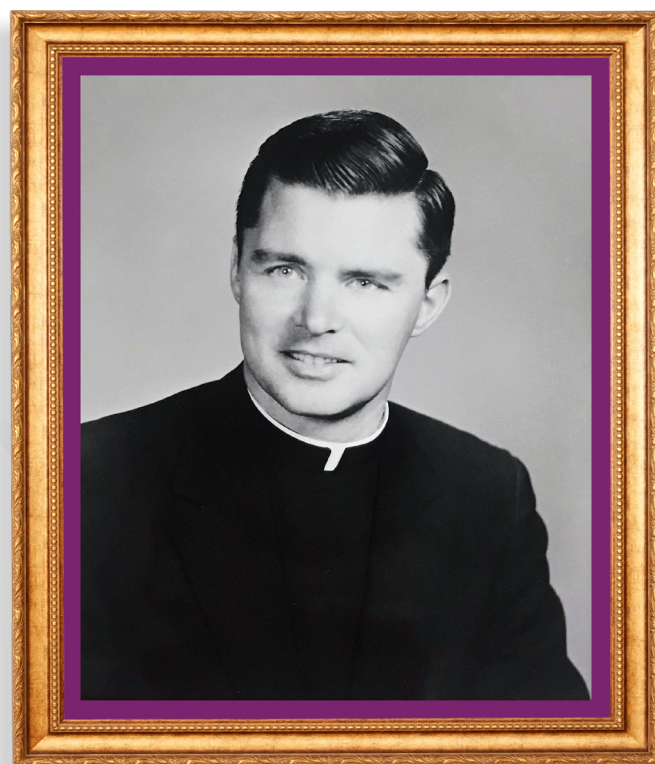
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“In 1966, my father died suddenly of a heart attack. I was 6 years old. Fr. Riley came to my home while my mother was still at Bryn Mawr Hospital. He took the four youngest of eight siblings for a walk in our neighborhood to explain heaven to us. Fr. George was 31 years old and was given that job. I carry his kindness to this day.”



Fr. Riley singing

If you are unable to attend in person, virtual tickets are available and donations in honor of Fr. Riley are welcome. **Visit: AugustinianFund.org/father-riley**



Join the Celebration



Fr. Riley's novitiate class

“We know Fr. Riley through his weekend ministry at Maris Stella Church in Avalon. He blessed our home and we attended several of his “birthday celebrations.” We loved his Masses and his summertime retreats to honor St. Anne. He is one in a million, the best of the best!”



Upcoming Events:

Inauguration of the Fr. George F. Riley, O.S.A. Fund for Augustinian HealthCare *Saturday, October 23, 2021*

6:00 PM Cocktails; 7:00 PM Dinner

Villanova University • 800 E. Lancaster Ave. • Villanova, PA

To R.S.V.P., visit: AugustinianFund.org/father-riley

Contact: Madonna Sutter • Director of Advancement

phone: 267.272.3048 • email: madonna.sutter@augustinian.org



Join Us!

Celebrating the Legacy and Alumni of Msgr. Bonner High School

Saturday, November 13, 2021

5:00 PM Celebration of Mass

6:00 PM - 8:30 PM Cocktail Reception

Msgr. Bonner and Archbishop Prendergast High School

403 N. Lansdowne Ave. • Drexel Hill, PA

To R.S.V.P., visit: AugustinianFund.org/Bonner

Contact: Julia Phifer • Associate Director of Advancement

phone: 610.527.3330, ext. 239 • email: Julia.phifer@augustinian.org



Augustinian Friendship Gathering - Southwest Florida

January/February 2022

For details, please visit after November 15, 2021: AugustinianFund.org/southwest-florida

Augustinian Friendship Gathering - Andover, Massachusetts

Spring 2022

More details to follow after January 1, 2022

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