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June 19, 1987

Very Reverend T. Martin Nolan, o.s.a.
Prior General

Dear Father General,

As soon as I heard of Father Trapè's death, I felt the need to write to someone in Rome concerning my feelings. Who better than you with whom to share my thoughts? Despite the fact that Father Trapè had been sick for several years, his sudden death from cardiac arrest still took me by surprise. Though he is far happier now, I still deeply regret the passing of this great Augustinian priest and scholar.

It was certainly on his initiative as Prior General that the Patristic Institute was born and built in record time. This contribution alone would be sufficient to make him well remembered throughout the Order, and in Church circles worldwide. But his many scholarly works, in particular the editing of the Nuova Biblioteca Agostiniana over a period of more than twenty years has also assured his place among patristic scholars for many, many years to come.

But there is another facet of his life which should also be remembered, a very personal facet. From my earliest years as a student at St. Monica's I found him a very gentle and caring person who, despite all his scholarly pursuits, always had time for those who turned to him for counsel or advice.

He was called upon to lead the Order at a most difficult time: from the end of the Second Vatican Council through the formulation of our new Constitutions and into the first years of living them. These were very challenging years in our lives, because the old was already seen to be inadequate and the new had not yet been fashioned. And even when it had been, there was so much that was new that practice and its consequences sometimes lent themselves to confusion.

I do not pretend to recall all of Father Trapè's many virtues: these are only a few that have remained fixed in my mind. The Order has suffered a great loss in his death, but I am sure that Augustine himself is very proud of this loyal follower, even as we are. Most of all I think we should pray as Augustine taught us to do even for Monica, that the Lord Jesus will forgive him his failings and grant him a loving welcome to the Kingdom.

One final note: it seems providential that his life was spared all through the Centenary year of Augustine's conversion. He had looked forward to this event for several years, and he contributed to its success in varied ways, not the least being the Augustinian Congress in Rome, which he helped plan and organize from the very beginning. May the work he began in promoting Augustine and Augustinian studies be carried on by others in the Order whom he encouraged and even taught, so that the gift that he left us may not be lost to future generations of the Order and the Church. May he rest in the peace of Christ!

Fraternally in Augustine,

Theodore E. Tack, o.s.a.