

Friends of St. Augustine - Prayer Resource Guide

From our Chaplain

December 6th., 2014

Dear Friends,

in just a few weeks time I will be moving from Greystanes to take up a position on the parish team of the Catholic Community of North Harbour in its task of ministering to the two churches of St Cecilia's, Balgowlah and St. Kieran's, Manly Vale. The pattern of my days will obviously change from the quietness of a Retreat House Ministry to the busyness of a parish routine, but my role of Chaplain will travel with me (rather like a turtle with its house on its back) as we continue to walk together as 'Friends of Augustine' one in mind and heart on our way to God.

More than half of my life as a priest has been spent in one or other of the Retreat Houses run by our Australian Province over the last thirty-seven years.. Under different titles we have had

- * a "Prayer Community" at Clayfield, Qld. (1977-1986),
- * a "Meditation Centre" in Newcastle NSW (1988-1995)
- * and an "Augustinian Spirituality Centre" at Greystanes (1997-2014).

It is generally agreed that the House of Prayer Movement (which arose as one of the first fruits of the Vatican Council) can trace its beginnings to a retreat preached by Fr. Bernard Haring in 1966 where he spoke of such places as a prime instrument for spiritual renewal. The Augustinian Province in Australia took up this challenge by setting aside a property which had been our Seminary residence at Clayfield (a suburb of Brisbane) for this purpose. Our main intention was first to deepen our own understanding and experience of Augustine's spirituality and then to share it with others in a grounded way. This was to be done not by preaching about it from the pulpit but by inviting laity to join the community for the time they had available where we could focus on discovering and deepening areas of their prayer life from an Augustinian point of view.

Once the property at Clayfield was sold a smaller venture was begun in Newcastle where, from a rented townhouse, the ongoing care and nurturing of the spirituality of adults could take place. This soon developed into an outreach to those recovering from addiction and persons suffering from AIDS as well as patients in the Mercy Palliative Care Unit who were all helped by methods of meditation which could be taught on the streets if necessary rather than in the rarefied atmosphere of a monastery. After a

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The Purpose of the Prayer Resource Guide

Each of us is on a journey to God like our patron Augustine.

The Friends prayer resource is offered to you as a support in your day to day prayer and will be sent to you 4 times a year.

It is centered on the Gospel readings and quotes from Augustine. Formation material is offered from different sources including a prayer orientated letter from our Chaplain.

period of seven years we were equivalently running a ‘parish without borders’ throughout that diocese with people coming from Swansea to Cessnock to attend our courses and workshops. This venture closed because not enough men were available to form a community to support one another and the people who sought refuge with us.

A few years later Greystanes was set up as an “Augustinian think-tank” out of which courses and prayer-days could be devised for Province members themselves and for lay people interested in sharing our charism and tradition. A special emphasis was given to the staff of both our Colleges who, in batches of four or five participants, came to spend time away at our Centre learning about the history and traditions of the school communities they might have only just joined. Incrementally over the years up to five hundred teachers came to experience the hospitality and friendship that lies at the heart of Augustine’s Rule and were encouraged to take these insights back to share with their pupils.

As we set about closing the Retreat House (for the time being), I am grateful for the opportunity it has given me of being able to *share* the gift of Augustine’s spiritual insights to an extent not always possible in a busy environment. In the words of Thomas Merton, the requirement to look inward and touch more deeply the well-springs of prayer and reflection enables each of us to continue being “the vulnerable, open and loving brothers and sisters to everyone”.

**May the Peace and Joy of the Saviour's Birth
find a tender home in each of your hearts,
With much love,**

Paul

Nativity Prayer of St. Augustine

*Let the just rejoice,
for their justifier is born.
Let the sick and infirm rejoice,
for their saviour is born.
Let the captives rejoice,
for their Redeemer is born.
Let slaves rejoice,
for their Master is born.
Let free men rejoice,
for their Liberator is born.
Let all Christians rejoice,
for Jesus Christ is born.*

St. Augustine of Hippo (AD 353 - 440)